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Figure 1. The memorial of Lady Anne Murray, 1768-1772, First Scots Presbyterian Church, 57 Meeting Street. Courtesy of First Scots Presbyterian Church. MESDA research file (MRF) S-8722.

Editor's note: This issue of the Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts marks the opening of MESDA's West Wing, an expansion of the museum primarily intended as a drawing-together of the Museum's extensive holdings of Charleston material, and hence the interpretation of these objects. In the eighteenth century, interior architecture was no less important than the movables which filled rooms to one degree or another, so we consider it appropriate here to examine the new setting of our Low Country furniture. The social history of Humphrey Sommers' own rooms are particularly important to us in the interpretive sense, and that is why a great deal more biographical information about that individual is used here than might be considered necessary in an architectural study. Sommers' biography, particularly in regard to his rise through the ranks of "mechanicks" to the status of "gentleman," is actually an interesting parallel to the carvers themselves. Indeed, this article might well have been titled "Vertical Mobility: Carvers and their Patrons in Late Colonial Charleston."

*Charleston Rococo Interiors, 1765-1775:
The "Sommers" Carver*

JOHN BIVINS, JR.

The economic boom which the South Carolina Low Country began to enjoy by the 1730's, and which continued with few breaks until the first quarter of the nineteenth century, made itself felt most poignantly in the ten years preceding the Revolution. It was during that decade that the coincidence of burgeoning wealth and the arrival of foreign artisans brought about the creation of Charleston's finest existing interior architecture.

In a lengthy report by Lieutenant Governor William Bull to the Earl of Hillsborough written in the fall of 1770, Bull reported in extensive detail upon the nature of the government, culture, and manufactures of the province. In a manner typical of such reports by colonial officials, Bull's "Representation of the Colony" pandered to the Crown's monolithic mercantilist view of the world. Hillsborough, as Secretary of State for the American Plantations, was the appropriate individual to be reassured that the humble colony of South Carolina could not compete with the manufactures of Britain. "Manufactures never thrive but in countries that are very populous, and where labour is consequently at a low price," observed Bull, who used that reasoning to assure London that "attempts to establish them here can never succeed to any degree, where there is so much room to employ labour in agriculture and trade with more profit." By extension, of course, Carolina could not possibly presume to equal the cultural amenities of the mother country. "Of arts and sciences we have only such branches as serve the necessities," wrote Bull, who suggested that "the more refined such as serve to adorn or minister to the luxuries of life are as yet little known here," a condition

which Bull imputed to the state of the “moderate fortunes” of South Carolina gentry. “Our houses,” Bull observed, “are plain but convenient”¹ It’s perhaps well for William Bull that Hillsborough never took the opportunity to observe for himself evidence of such an alleged paucity of “luxuries” in the Low Country, or just how “convenient” the houses in Charleston were. During the 1760’s, the intrepid British traveler J.F.D. Smyth painted a rather different view of such “conveniences”: “. . . of all the towns in North America [Charleston] is the one in which the conveniences of luxury are most to be met with.”² In 1775, Josiah Quincy was even more lavish in his praise of the city, reporting that “. . . in grandeur, splendour of buildings, decorations . . . and indeed in almost everything, it far surpasses all I ever saw, or expected to see, in America.”³ Both of these young gentlemen had availed themselves of hospitality in the finest of America’s coastal residences from North to South, so their exuberance may be considered more useful than the rather slanted reporting with which Bull judiciously chose to provide the Crown. While the Lieutenant Governor may have wished his masters in London to consider South Carolina but a humble, though useful, stone in the British diadem, there is every evidence that the British immigrants who arrived in Charleston in a steady stream during the colonial period saw the province in a different light. In the Low Country they found the means to advance themselves in a fashion that would have been far more elusive in London. Vertical mobility in both finances and social standing was readily obtainable to those with the proper motivation. Such individuals found themselves readily assimilated into the Low Country gentry which was already exceedingly well established through mercantile pursuits and the cultivation of rice and indigo. The expanding fortunes of the newcomers provided them with the ability to surround themselves with the amenities of life to a degree that certainly paralleled the middle class of London.

In the decade preceding the Revolution, a significant proportion of Charleston’s power structure had risen from the ranks of “mechanicks.” Among this group of former artisans were men like Daniel Cannon, formerly a carpenter,⁴ and Alexander Petrie, who had parlayed a successful silversmithing trade into an impressive and diverse portfolio of investments in real estate and similar ventures. Both ownership of town land and the structures which stood on them, in fact, were a good measure of Charleston’s substantial *per capita* wealth during the colonial period. An actual

count of the dwellings in the city in 1770 indicated that some 1,292 houses lined Charleston's sandy streets. From this data, Lieutenant Governor Bull estimated a total population of almost 10,900, slightly over half of which was black. Despite the disastrous fires of 1778, 1796, and 1861, the large number of dwellings surviving from the last ten years of the colonial period attest to the extensive building boom which the city saw during that period. Daniel Cannon was by no means the only artisan whose fortunes ascended rapidly at the time. Samuel Cardy, the "ingenious Architect, who undertook and compleated the Building of St. Michael's Church in this Town," along with William Rigby Naylor, the probable designer of the Charleston Exchange, and John Fullerton, a builder to whom a number of houses in the city may be attributed, were all carpenters and joiners who had emigrated from the British Isles.⁵ There were other such emigrant artisans associated with the building trades, among whom was Humphrey Sommers, whose own dwelling, still standing on Tradd Street, has provided us with a key to the identification of a major group of southern interiors. The reproduction by MESDA of two of Sommers' rooms in fact, has led to this study. It was considered necessary to study all of the work attributable to the carver who executed Sommers' "apartments" in order to provide an accurate representation of the carver's style and technique. Further, knowledge of Sommers' steady rise in community standing, culminating in his fine residence, provides us with something of a social backdrop for the essence of an age in which sizeable elements of Low Country material culture proceeded well beyond mere "convenience."

Hardly a better example of vertical mobility in late colonial Charleston could be found than Humphrey Sommers. At his death in 1788 he was esteemed "a remarkable instance of the good effects of temperance with exercise, and of industry with economy" The same obituary noted that Sommers had died "in the 77th year of his age," and "was born in the west of England," arriving in "this country upwards of 50 years ago."⁶ At the time of his death, Sommers owned a total of 3,000 acres of land at his "Cypress Plantation" in St. George's Parish and at "Stono" plantation in St. Paul's Parish, along with a number of properties at both ends of Tradd Street in the city. His personal estate, including 225 slaves, was worth £15,691; this did not include the value of his real estate, which was considerable.⁷ Sommers had applied his "industry" with zeal, and had not

stinted in lavish and patriotic support of the province during the Revolution. He was listed among the fifty largest bondholders of the South Carolina debt incurred from 1776 to 1780, having made a single loan of £60,000 current money of South Carolina; the loan was still outstanding in the spring of 1780.⁸

Sommers presumably arrived in Charleston, then, about 1740. His beginnings there were humble. The first mention of his presence in South Carolina occurred in a deed of 1748, when Sommers, identified as a "Slater" of Charles Town, purchased part of town lot 125 on King Street.⁹ In the winter of 1747/8 Sommers became member No. 122 of the South Carolina Society, a benevolent organization formed some ten years earlier, largely by Huguenot citizens of the city. He was appointed constable of that body.¹⁰ By the winter of 1749, Sommers had acquired additional property on King street, part of which was bounded by a "new road called Sommers Alley." In a sale of part of this property, Sommers' wife Susanna was first mentioned; Sommers was described as a "bricklayer."¹¹ During the following year, Sommers and his wife also purchased property on Church Street, and their acquisition of real estate continued apace from that time on. Several parcels of land in Colleton County were bought between 1751 and 1753. Half of lot number 7 at the northwest corner of Tradd and East Bay Streets was purchased in 1752; Sommers purchased an additional portion of the same lot as late as 1784.¹² By the late winter of 1752/53, Sommers' steady acquisition of both real and personal property had gained him the appellation of "gentleman" in a document detailing his purchase of 20 slaves from Robert Brewton.¹³ Sommers would have been about 42 years of age at the time, and it was probably during this period that his portrait (Fig.2) was painted by Jeremiah Theus, a fitting symbol of his rising social status. It is likely that Theus produced a portrait of Susanna Sommers at the same time.

By the early 1750's, as Sommers made the transition from bricklayer to gentleman, and from trowel to counting-house, he had no doubt expanded his trade into a full-fledged contracting firm. He was not without prestigious work. While Samuel Cardy is credited as the primary builder of St. Michael's church, the construction for which was begun in 1752, it appears that Sommers may have been at least one of the principle subcontractors. Church records of 1753-1757 detail work which Sommers performed at St. Michael's, including slating the roof, altering "the gable End" in preparation for construction of the steeple, plastering or

stuccoing the steeple, changing the bases of the portico columns, during the course of which he had used 2,000 bricks, breaking "out the Wall and work[ing] up the Pillaster against the Church," and supplying quantities of building materials.¹⁴

During the 1750's Sommers continued aggressive purchases of land surrounding his Stono plantation in Colleton County, and by the 1760's he had added a collection of land parcels comprising his Cypress Plantation in Berkeley County. In the city, he also continued to acquire real estate, buying lots and portions of lots on King, Church, and Tradd streets. During the first half of the 1760's, the west end of the latter thoroughfare terminated in marshlands surrounding a network of small creeks flowing into the Ashley River. This portion of the city was purchased by Thomas Shubrick from the estate of Benjamin de la Conseillère, whose name had been given to the principle run of two of the creeks in the Tradd Street marsh. Shubrick parcelled four lots and over six acres of marsh for sale; the marsh evidently was surveyed, and new lot numbers assigned to them in the early 1760's. In October, 1762, Humphrey Sommers bought a lot in the tract "numbered in a resurvey as number one." The lot was situated on the south side of Tradd, and bounded on "Councillair's Creek." Sommers sold this property to William Williamson two years later, and no further record of land transactions on the west end of Tradd by Sommers have been found.¹⁵ The date of Sommers' acquisition of his lot on the north side of Tradd Street is unknown. This property apparently was located directly across the street from his 1762 purchase; it may have been part of the dowry of his first wife, Susanna. This land was to become his building site, and may have been part of the marsh divided into lots by Shubrick. The site was north of former lot number 95 on the 1725 "Grand Modell" of Charleston, and Sommers' lot was located at what was later the northeast corner of Tradd and Logan Streets. Today, all traces of Conseillère's Creek and its wide marshes, which must have provided a pleasant view from the house which Sommers later built, have disappeared.

Sommers' rise to the gentry, quite naturally, was marked by various public offices which he held. He served in the Commons House of the Twenty-fifth Royal Assembly in 1762 as a representative of St. Paul's Parish, and was twice appointed road commissioner in the Dorchester vicinity where his "Cypress" plantation was located. Sommers oversaw the cutting of drains on the Stono River, and was "Commissioner of the Work House &

Markets & the Poor'' in Charleston for 1760-1761.¹⁶ Sommers' two outlying plantations and his political offices in those districts are typical of the wealthy Low Country planter who found it more convenient to live in the city during much of the year. It is probable that by the 1760's Sommers' contracting trade had become but a small portion of his income, and in fact there is no evidence to support the possibility that he even continued that part of his business past the early 1760's.



Figure 2. Humphrey Sommers, by Jeremiah Theus, 1750-1754, oil on canvas, HOA: 30'', WOA: 25''. Courtesy Craig and Tarlton, Inc., Scott Hyde, photographer.

Susanna Sommers died on 11 January 1765¹⁷; it is not known where the Sommers were living at the time. By 1767, Sommers had begun to follow the familiar summer pastime of Charleston gentry by escaping the enervating, damp heat of the Low Country for the refreshing air of Newport, Rhode Island. On 28 July 1767 the *South-Carolina Gazette; and Country Journal* reported that

Sommers and various others, including Charleston cabinetmaker Jonathan Badger, had “sailed for Rhode-Island,” and the *Newport Mercury* reported their arrival. Sommers made the same voyage in August of 1769, with Badger again a part of the passenger manifest. In June, 1771, the *Mercury* again noted the arrival of Sommers in Rhode Island, but on that occasion he was listed as “Humphry Sommers, Esq: and Lady.” This particular summer junket was rather more extended, for it was not until



Figure 3. Marcy Olney Sommers, by Jeremiah Theus, ca.1769, oil on canvas, HOA 30", W'OA 25". Courtesy the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, accession 25.402.

17 October of the same year that the *South Carolina Gazette* reported their return among “a Number of our Inhabitants, who have been, either for Health or Pleasure, to the Northward.”¹⁸ The “Lady” was Mercy or “Marcy” Olney of Rhode Island, whom Sommers is said to have married in 1769, presumably during the course of his August voyage of that year.¹⁹ Theus captured the

new Mrs. Sommers' likeness (Fig.3) at about this time, and the size of the painting indicates that it was rendered to hang *en suite* with the earlier portrait of Sommers.

While no actual construction date for the Sommers house has been found, it may be speculated that the building was begun at the time of Sommers' second marriage, or probably late in 1769. This corresponds with the approximate date of several other dwellings in this study. By the fall of 1772, the account book of cabinetmaker Thomas Elfe began to show entries for sundry repairs and other work done for Sommers. A "Large Close [clothes] press with a pediment head Cutopin" was delivered in November at a cost of £85. In December of that year, in addition to "Tak.g down & putg up a bedsd [bedstead]," Elfe charged Sommers £12 for a "Childs Chair Carved" on the 23rd of the month, presumably a Christmas gift for one of the Sommers children. In May of 1773, Elfe charged Sommers for "a double chest of drawers with a fret round" at £80, a "Mahogany bedstead fluted post & Brass Caps With a Carved Cornish," £65, for a set of brass casters, and for a "Lady's dressing drawers for daughter" £45. A simple "poplar Bedstead" worth £6:10 was delivered the following September. Interestingly, Sommers' total account with Elfe of £218:2:6 was not paid in full until July, 1774.²⁰ Such a snail-like pace of cash flow proved to be the death of many an eighteenth century establishment. Sommers certainly had no problems with his own finances at the time; in early 1772 he donated £70 South Carolina currency to the College of Philadelphia, following the lead of Charleston luminaries such as Lieutenant Governor Bull, Henry Middleton, Gabriel Manigault, and Miles Brewton.²¹

During the winter of 1779, Sommers lost his only son, William, a resident of St. John's parish, and in November of 1780 the death of "Mrs. Mercy Sommers" was reported "near Dorchester," presumably at "Cypress" plantation.²² At some time during the same decade, Sommers added an L-shaped wing to his house; this appendage is evident in Edmund Petrie's map, the *Ichonography of Charleston, South Carolina* which was published in London in 1790, but had been prepared from an "Actual Survey 2d August 1788." It was on the 18th of December of that year when Sommers made his will, leaving his three minor daughters, Ann Olney, Susanna, and Mary his city and country estates. When she was to "attain to the Age of sixteen Years," Mary Sommers was to receive all of the "Land and

Buildings . . . lying and being at the upper End or West End of Tradd Street”²³ The Sommers lot evidently was later divided on the west side of the lot by the opening of Logan Street. Mary Sommers, and David Deas, whom she subsequently married, sold a portion of the lot to William Logan in 1803; the children of Mary Sommers Deas later sold the remaining property, including the house and dependencies, to Mrs. Elizabeth Pinckney Lowndes in 1830. Judge Edward Frost acquired the property in 1841, and made further additions to the house, possibly including the piazzas. The house has descended in the Frost/Parker families since that time.²⁴

Sommers’ estate in Charleston was appraised in March, 1789. The executors were Edmund Petrie and Thomas Waring. The Tradd Street house contained such things as a fire screen, a mahogany book case, a “round Tea Table,” a mahogany “com-mode tea Table,” a pair of arm chairs, an easy chair, six “Walnut chairs,” a “Marble Slab and Stand,” a pair of mahogany dining tables, an eight day clock, a mahogany bedstead, a mahogany “corner chair,” a “double set Mahogany Chest Drawers” along with a “single do.,” a basin stand and card table, both of mahogany, a pine chest, and a “Writing Desk and Stand.” Sommers owned 368 1/2 ounces of silver valued at somewhat over £92. The double chest, presumably the “double chest of drawers with a fret round” for which Elfe charged Sommers £80, was valued at but £8, reflecting the depreciation of the old South Carolina currency during the Revolutionary period. Other than the double chest, the most expensive articles of furniture in Sommers’ house were the fire screen, valued at £5, the bookcase, valued at £8, and the tallcase clock, which was listed at £5.²⁵ The expensive “Large Close press with pediment head Cutopin” which Elfe had made for Sommers was not listed in the inventory of the Tradd Street house, nor in the sparser furnishing schedules of either Stono or Cypress plantations. It is possible that this press was the same article as the “Mahogany Book case” in the Charleston residence.

In its original configuration of ca. 1769-1770, Sommers’ frame house at what is now 128 Tradd Street was two stories over a full above-grade basement. The south side of the house faces the street, and this elevation is graced with “tabernacle” frames on the lower windows. That is, the window architraves are surmounted by pitch pediments and heavy pulvinated friezes, a common Charleston architectural form in the 1765-1775 decade.



Figure 4. The Humphrey Sommers house, 128 Tradd Street, 1769-1770, west (front) and south elevations. MRF S-12127.

The sills of these windows are supported by shaped consoles or “trusses” as they were known at the time; the upper windows are adorned only with similar consoles. The slated bell-cast roof and robust modillioned cornice are also familiar Charleston details. The plan of the house is the most distintively regional detail of the building. Only a single room in depth, the house, before Sommers later addition of an ell on the north, contained four rooms on two floors, served by a central stair hall. The projecting east stair tower (Fig.5), replete with an elegant “Venetian” window, as it would have been known in Sommers’ time, is largely intact. The existence of the full roof cornice on the west front of the house, coupled with a preliminary examination of interior disturbance of the stair passage wainscoting, indicates that the west elevation may have been finished not with a double piazza, but with a projecting classical porch. Since the present hall wainscot has been cut at the present door, the original porch may

have been enclosed, providing a symmetry of plan with the stair tower on the east that would have been pleasing to the eighteenth century mind. It is not unreasonable to suspect that if the Sommers house did indeed have such an enclosed porch, that it may well have received a Venetian treatment similar to the stair tower. A fine example of such a porch was to be found on a house built during the same period on Broad Street. This dwelling, the William Burroughs house, is now gone, but its street elevation is illustrated in Mills Lane's *Architecture of the Old South: South*



Figure 5. The Humphrey Sommers house, east and south elevations. MRF S-12127.



Figure 6. The Humphrey Sommers house, first floor south parlor chimneypiece. MRF S-12127.

Carolina (Savannah, the Beehive Press, 1984; p.72). In the Sommers house, a Venetian doorway, however, would not have corresponded with the same level as the Venetian window of the stair, which is located on the landing.

Many of the double piazzas on Charleston “single” houses, as they have been called since the eighteenth century, were added in the Neoclassical period or even later, making it difficult to

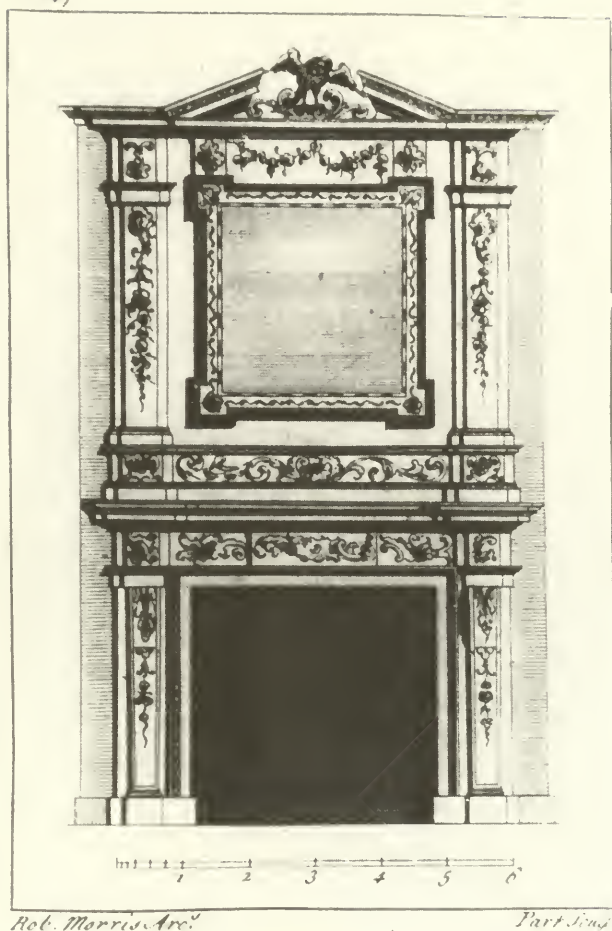


Figure 7. Elevation of a chimneypiece from Robert Morris' Architectural Remembrancer of 1751, Plate 47.

determine original entry forms. All of the porticos on the buildings illustrated here, in fact, are later additions. The single house, with its entry elevation characteristically aligned perpendicular to the street, is a plan that developed rapidly in Charleston after the 1750's. The earliest examples of Low Country single houses, such as the Robert Brewton house at 71 Church, may have been finished more typically with entries on the street elevation. Parallel

structures were not exactly foreign to urban British architecture. In Plate 5 of the section entitled "Bricklayer's Work," Joseph Moxon illustrates the three-bay street elevation of a three-story brick dwelling remarkably similar to the Brewton house in his *Mechanick Exercises: or the Doctrine of Handy-Works* published in London in 1703.

Typical of the more sophisticated Charleston houses is the location of the Sommers parlor, which was the most important room, almost a full story above the filth of the street, and placed to receive the prevailing breezes. Technically, the Sommers parlor is located on the first floor of the house, since the basement was a service floor, and the principle entry was above the basement. The more common plan, both in Charleston and urban Britain, called for the parlor to be located on the second floor, or the level above the entry floor. The location of the principle room on the second floor of a town house is certainly not confined to Charleston, but rather is characteristic of a number of the more sophisticated American coastal dwellings of the eighteenth century. It should be noted that a good deal of confusion regarding the identification of rooms existed in the eighteenth century, and this problem remains with us. In Charleston, the terms "parlor," "drawing room," and "hall" were used interchangeably during the same period in the rare inventories which list furnishings by room. The term "hall" to designate the largest room was an ancient one; what we know as a hall today usually was the "passage" in the eighteenth century. It is thought by some that a "drawing room" usually was considered a smaller, more intimate space where ladies could "withdraw," but this usage may have been more British than American. For our purposes, the term "parlor" is used to designate the principle room of a house.

In the Sommers house, the parlor is located on the south end, or Tradd Street side of the house. This room is approximately nineteen feet square, fully paneled with raised fields, and the door and window openings are finished with architraves crossetted at the upper backbands. The full cornice is finished with denticulation of the Doric order, providing a "keyed" effect. Unlighted closets originally flanked the chimney piece, though the south closet was replaced with a window in the nineteenth century. Above the parlor on the third floor is a bed chamber, also fully paneled and with a full cornice, but the dentils employed in the chamber are the more normal elongated block form.

The chimney piece of the Sommers parlor (Fig.6) is one of Charleston's major specimens of interior architecture, and is, in fact, the most elaborate surviving Rococo chimneypiece in the city that is constructed entirely of wood. The only marble used covers the fireplace jamb fascias and hearth. This material appears to be identical to the marble quarried at King Of Prussia, Pennsylvania, but other quarries no doubt yielded similar marble. The elevation of this chimneypiece may have been inspired by plate 47 of Robert Morris' 1751 *Architectural Remembrancer: Being a Collection of New and Useful Designs . . . to Which are Added a Variety of Chimneypieces* (Fig.7), but a quick comparison of the Sommers work and the Morris plate yield significant differences. This particular work by Morris was only one of a sizeable number of architectural design sources known to have been in Charleston during the eighteenth century, both in private hands and in the collection of the Charleston Library Society. In fact, MESDA research indicates that over twenty-one authors of architectural design sources, building theory, and furniture design were represented in Charleston collections during our period of interest, a number of them with multiple titles. All of these sources have not been examined, but it is significant that no Charleston interior in the Rococo style has been found that is anything like a precise copy of either published room elevations or carving designs. The exception to this is the use of certain standard carved moldings and some symmetrical applied flowers, commonly known as "coffers" in eighteenth century architectural books. The term "coffer" actually signifies a recessed panel set into the soffit of a cornice, usually between mutules (Fig. 19c). Such flowers were also used as metope ornament between the triglyphs of a frieze (Fig. 19c). While precise wooden copies of contemporary architectural engravings may be exciting to the architectural historian, the fact is that skilled carvers in the eighteenth century were also trained to be accomplished draftsmen, so it should be no surprise that available design sources were commonly used for no more than suggestions for work to be executed. This was certainly true of Charleston work before the Revolution.

Even though it is covered with at least seven heavy layers of paint, the detail work of the Sommers parlor chimneypiece may be seen to be well conceived and executed. This carving, however, is not imbued with all of the restlessness and flowing, spiny movement of best London work of the time, as we shall examine later.

The original paint scheme of the parlor was a monochromatic brown ochre. Microscopic analysis of wood samples from some of the carving appliquéés indicates that the carver used white pine. Although not all of the elements were tested, it is logical to assume that all of the appliquéés and carved moldings are also white pine. The same is probably true for all of the structures examined in this study, though a microscopic wood analysis was made of only one other dwelling, the John Edwards house (Fig. 37); the carving in that building is also white pine. That material, in fact, was common in Charleston at the time. In 1980, Bradford Rauschenberg, in an examination of the South Carolina State House in Charleston, recorded £55:17:19 worth of "New England Pine Plank for the Carver" purchased in 1768.²⁶ White pine is superior to both yellow pine and cypress for carving, although the latter wood was used for construction of both the paneling and its attendant framing—the stiles and rails—in the Sommers house.

The overmantel of the Sommers parlor shows alteration at its base, possibly the result of an accident. The carved and crossetted outer frame of the overmantel now terminates in a modern plinth, and the cyma reversa bed moldings of both flanking pilasters have been replaced with simple fillet moldings. Although the original finish of the lower portion of the overmantel is not known, it is the author's opinion that the outer frame continued to the mantel shelf, and that a large carved appliqué filled the space formed by the outer frame, the lower rail of the inner frame, and the mantel shelf. This conjectural carving would have been a full four and one-half feet in length, visually balancing the mass of carving adorning the consoles, frieze, and central tablet of the mantel below. Future removal of both the modern plinth and the layers of paint covering the lower segment of the overmantel may reveal further evidence.

The working style of the anonymous artisan whom we identify only as the "Sommers carver" is evident both in his design work and the methods by which he employed his tools. In the Sommers house, and indeed in most of the other interiors attributed to the hand of this carver, the general style reveals a somewhat conservative application of Rococo design that suggests an urban carver trained during the transitional period when Baroque composition was being drawn into the more dynamic style of the Rococo. The Baroque aspects of this carver's design work lie in a very strong tendency toward symmetrical construction and a somewhat

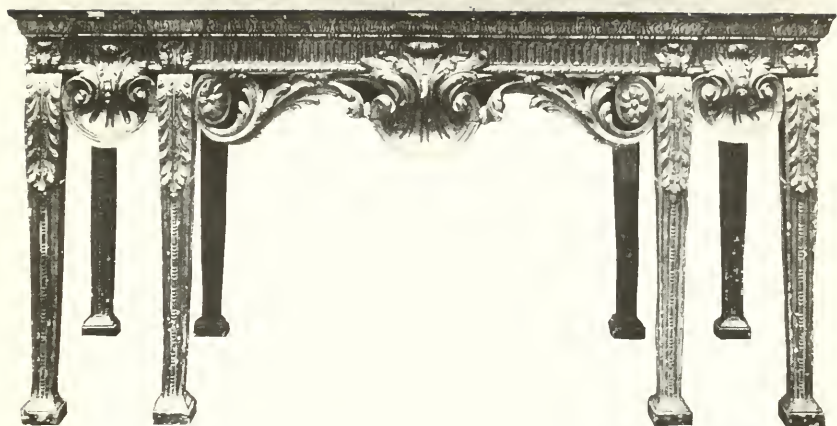


Figure 8. Sideboard table with slab, British, 1740-1755. Illustrated in *Furniture in England from 1660-1760* by Francis Lenygon (London: B.T. Batsford, 1924), Fig. 207.

ponderous, lobate aspect of leaf design and execution. In contrast with the most fashionable London work of the mid-1740's to the beginning of the Neoclassical style there in the 1760's, the draftsmanship of the Sommers carver reveals less of the spiny crispness and greater energy of movement characteristic of high Rococo in London, and is better related to the "softer" transitional Rococo and even late Baroque ornament associated with architects such as Kent, Langley, and their contemporaries of the 1730's and 1740's such as Henry Flitcroft. These architects provided the only British sally into the world of furniture design before the publication of Chippendale's *Director* in 1754, and their delineations, naturally enough, were often ponderously architectural in nature. Stylistically somewhat less heavy-handed than furniture in Kent's style, though nevertheless quite architectural, an English gilt sideboard table with a slab top (Fig. 8) very likely dates from the 1740's and is typical of the transitional Baroque-to-Rococo style. This table shows in the composition of its scrolled leafage and the pendant acanthus on the knees of the "term" legs a treatment remarkably close in style to the work of the Sommers carver.

While there is little to criticize in the Sommers carver's spatial understanding, the flow of his designs, and the visual depth of the work, a number of the hallmarks of late British Rococo design and execution often are either sparingly used or missing entirely.



Figure 9. A plate from *A New Book of Ornaments on 16 Leaves for the Year 1762* by P. Barette (London, 1762).

The use of vastly distorted scrollwork, disappearing planes, shattered and jagged rock-like projections, twisted quasi-architectural elements, spiny foliage, rustic follies, and even standard rocaille devices such as dripping seaweed, cascades of water, and foam-like ruffling, all characteristic of the restlessness of the best London Rococo, are given relatively little play in the work of this carver. Except for the use of fretwork on some of



Figure 10. A plate from *A New Book of Ornaments for the* 1746 by H. Copland (London, 1746).

the Sommers carver's chimneypieces, the Chinese taste is not represented. Most of this artisan's stylistic vocabulary, then, seems to have developed by the early 1740's, though there are exceptions, as we shall examine.

Of the numerous books of architecture and ornament available to Charleston carvers during the 1765-1775 decade, approximately a dozen contained at least some representation of modish Rococo

design, and some were quite filled with it. These included William Salmon's *London and Country Builder's Vade Mecum*, first issued in 1745, Swan's *Collection of Designs in Architecture, etc.* of 1757, Robert Morris' *Select Architecture, etc.* of 1755, Morris' *Architectural Remembrancer* of 1751, Batty Langley's *Builder's Director, etc.* of 1746-1767, William Pain's *Builder's Companion* of 1758, Swan's *British Architect* of 1758, Matthias Darly's *Ornamental Architect* of 1772, Charles Over's *Ornamental Architecture in the Gothick, Chinese, and Modern Taste* of 1758, and Baretti's *New Book of Ornaments . . . for the Year 1762*. Both Chippendale's *Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* and Ince and Mayhew's *Universal System of Household Furniture* were sold by Robert Wells of Charleston, who along with some of the titles listed above, also offered *The School of Art*, ". . . being an extensive series . . . selected from the Designs of those eminent Masters, Watteau, Boucher, Le Brun, Bouchardon, Eisen, &c. &c."²⁷ Most of the architectural books in the collection of the Charleston Library Society during this decade, with the exception of Pain's *Builder's Companion*, dealt with Palladian treatises such as Salmon's *Palladio Londinensis* of 1734, Gibbs' *Book of Architecture* of 1728, and even Vitruvius' *De Architectura* of 1649.²⁸

Interestingly, one of the design books in Charleston during the period, Baretti's *New Book of Ornaments for 1762*, contained some very precise plagiarism of Copland's *New Book of Ornaments for 1746* (see Figs.9 and 10). Such crass copying was rife in the eighteenth century, though most such stylistic robbery was executed by London designers copying the work of French artists such as Marot, Watteau and Messionier. In the instance shown here, Baretti's plate is a mirror image of the original, since the engraver evidently chose to transfer Copland's printed designs directly to a new copperplate without inverting them. Copland's plate is far more forcefully drawn and cut, and provides a better sense of the writhing, almost tattered nature of best London design in the "Modern Taste," as the Rococo was known at the time.

While the architectural work of the Sommers carver may not have been as modish for the period as that of, say, Luke Lightfoot of London, whose magnificent pair of carved birds done for Claydon House in Buckinghamshire in 1769 were shown in the National Gallery's monumental *Treasure Houses of Britain* exhibition of 1985, the Charleston carver's work nevertheless has a conservative urban fluency of its own. That the Sommers carver

owned an extensive tool kit is evident in the diversity and shape of his cuts. A well-equipped shop would certainly be expected of an artisan who produced such a significant quantity of work over a relatively short period of time. In fact, allowing for work done by this carver that is now missing, it is logical to assume that the work illustrated here was produced by a shop in which several hands were employed. The uniformity of the finish cuts, however, show the work of a single carver, indicating that if indeed the Sommers carver employed apprentices and/or journeymen, he very likely executed most of the final modeling and detailing of the work himself. This would not have been unusual in an early shop, where the "bolstering" system was used to produce work. In a carver's shop, for example, the journeymen might be expected to rough out the designs, leaving the finish cuts for the master.



Figure 11. *Sommers mantel tablet appliqué. MRF S-12128.*

A brief analysis of the central carving of the parlor mantel indicates something of the working methodology of the Sommers carver. Like all of the appliqué work, this design was almost certainly drawn first on a piece of paper, and a cutting pattern supplied by simply pricking the outside edges of the pattern. By placing the paper pattern on a pine plank, in this instance a board approximately one inch thick, colored pounce powder could be rubbed through the pinpricked holes in order to transfer the pattern. Various media were used for pounce, including fine pumice, brick dust, and even powdered charcoal. Bow saws of varying sizes then could be employed to saw both the outside

edges and the piercings of the pattern, and a lead pencil or a scribe used to delineate the interior portions of the pattern. The roughed-out workpiece was then attached to a secondary backing plank of softwood; the most practical method of attachment was with hide glue, using a piece of paper as an interface between the workpiece and its backer to facilitate removing the carving from the backer later with either water or steam. With the workpiece tightly glued down, the risk of splitting out pieces of the edges while making heavy undercuts was minimized. Strong undercutting was necessary for quality architectural carving in order to emphasize the finished elements with dramatic shadow lines, thereby providing dimension. This was particularly critical in an age when such ornament was viewed only by natural daylight or candles.



Figure 12. Modern carver's cutting pattern of a portion of the Sommers mantel tablet carving, showing in the darker arcs the cuts set in with gouges of various radii.

The interior portions of an applied pattern, rather than being sawn, were “set in” or cut straight down with a series of gouges and chisels driven either with a mallet or the heel of the hand. A portion of the modern cutting pattern for the central mantel ornament is illustrated in Figure 12, showing in the darker arcs the areas where gouges of various radii were employed to set in



Figure 13. One of a pair of strapwork appliqués, Sommers mantel frieze. MRF S-12128.

the outline of various leaves. Where the arcs are shown the darkest, secondary cuts with the same tools were required in the finish modeling in order to emphasize the cuts and make them "read." In this particular section of one pattern, a minimum of 104 vertical gouge cuts were required, and at least twelve different radii of gouges were used. Similar hollow tools would have been used by the Sommers carver to correct outside edges where the bow saw had not followed the pounced outline accurately.



Figure 14. The following eleven figures illustrate techniques used by the author in carving the strapwork appliqué illustrated in Figure 13. Here excess material is removed with a 1 1/2" no. 5 gouge . . .

After the interior details had been set in, a series of both hollow and flat carving tools were used to rough in the pattern, dropping the lowest elements so that they projected little more than 1/8" above the surface. During the process of rough modeling, the design often must be redrawn several times. This basic process is shown in a group of sequential photographs (Figs. 14-14g) detailing the carving of an end leaf on one of the pairs of strapwork (Fig. 13) which flank the central carving of the

Sommers mantel. Secondary cuts and final veining of the central flower in this strapwork are shown in Figs. 14h-14j. The carving techniques shown here are like those used by the Sommers carver. The reader will note that the initial layout was made with paper blueline prints pasted to the workpiece, obviously a convenient modern approach.



Figure 14a. . . . the principle scrolls are then set in with the same tool . . .



Figure 14b. . . . the leaves of a flower are set in with a 5/16" no. 6 gouge . . .



Figure 14c. . . . additional waste is removed with a 3/8" no. 9 gouge . . .



Figure 14d. . . . the leaves of a husk are rough-modeled with a 3/8" no. 5 gouge . . .



Figure 14e. . . . the scrolling acanthus is undercut with a 1/4" no. 9 gouge . . .



Figure 14f. . . . the hollows of the principle leaves are modeled with the same tool . . .



Figure 14g. . . . the leaf tips are rounded with a 1/4" no. 1 chisel . . .

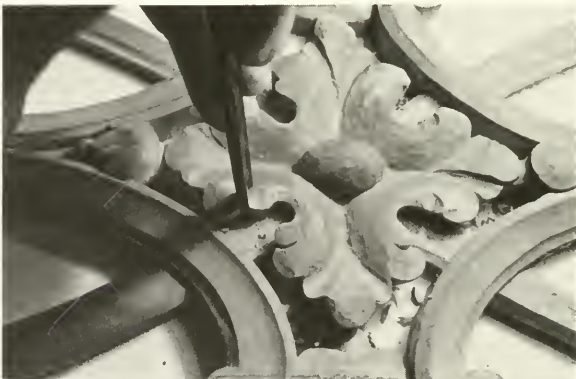


Figure 14h. . . . the leaflobes of the central flower are formed by setting in with a 5/16" no. 6 gouge . . .



Figure 14i. . . . followed by an angled chip cut with the same tool . . .



Figure 14j. . . . and the leaves of this flower are veined with a $5/32''$ no. 9 veiner.



Figure 15. The modern replica of the Sommers mantel tablet appliqué.



Figure 16. The right side console of the Sommers mantel. MRF S-12127.

Figure 16a. The modern replica of the same console shown before the background was stippled.



Figure 16b. Side view of the console illustrated in Figure 16. MRF S-12127.



Figure 16c. Side view of the replica console.

Actual replication of existing work provides significant insights to the methodology of early carvers. One serious drawback to understanding architectural carving, however, is the usual heavy encrustation of paint obliterating many small details which can serve as “signatures” of a carver’s work. A comparison of the replica (Fig. 15) of the carving pattern in Fig. 11 reveals how such details must be reconstructed from evidence that is often blurred. One of the elaborate consoles of the Sommers mantel had been partially cleaned by the owner, allowing a better comprehension of the nature of the original work, and therefore a reasonably accurate replica (Figs. 16a, b, c). There is nothing particularly unusual or highly distinctive about the working style of the Sommers carver. He tended to outline leaf ends with gouges of relatively tight radius, thereby giving the leaves the somewhat lobate, blunt appearance noted earlier. Most of the carved surfaces were quickly veined with small gouges and veining tools, which was simply a workmanlike means of providing a regular, flowing finish to all of the surfaces without having to resort to excessive smoothing with shallow-radiused gouges, chisels, and possibly even scrapers. Early carvers seldom resorted to any sanding with the occasional exception of large, flat elements or large-scale rounded surfaces such as the eggs of an egg-and-dart molding or the center boss of a large flower.²⁹ For the most part, it was carving tools themselves, maintained with razor-sharp edges, which provided the final finish.

The “signatures” of the Sommers carver’s style, then, lie in a series of details identified both in general design and actual execution. The rather blunt, lobed aspect of leafage, combined with the largely symmetrical nature of the designs, is coupled with deep and extensive use of veining, bold “chip” or gouge cuts which define the elements of leaves, and a fairly extensive employment of overlapping and deep undercutting to achieve visual depth. While the flow of the Sommers carver’s work is generally faultless, some finish details are occasionally somewhat naive, such as the treatment of leaf “eyes” which occur where acanthus leaves have folded overlaps. A good example of this is the leafage below the consoles of the Sommers parlor (Fig. 17). The best study of this carver’s work is found in the large memorial to Lady Anne Murray in First Scots Presbyterian Church (Fig. 1, Figs. 49-49c), where carving details have not been obscured by later layers of paint.



Figure 17. Detail of the acanthus carving below the console illustrated in Figure 16. MRF S-12127.



Figure 18. The Sommers overmantel appliqué. MRF S-12128.



Figure 18a. Detail of Figure 18. MRF S-12127.

Typical of most Charleston interiors in the Rococo style, the principle carving in the Sommers house is in the parlor. The chimneypiece of the bedchamber (Figs.19-19b) directly above the parlor is more restrained, employing only sawn fretwork, nicely executed “coffer” flowers, and miniature scrolled trusses.



Figure 19. The Sommers second floor south bedchamber mantel. MRF S-12127.

The identity of an artisan who produced any significant body of work is always desirable, but such information, more often than not, is quite elusive. While the identity of the Sommers carver remains a mystery, Charleston is not without documented architectural carving. MESDA research has revealed the presence of at least eighteen carvers working in the Charleston vicinity between 1740 and 1800. Thirteen of these were working in the last decade of the colonial period. Three of the thirteen were apprentices or journeymen. As many as five of these men were trained in England. At least one carver, Henry Burnett, who was working in the period before 1765, was also trained in England. His work is well documented by the interiors of St. Michael's



Figure 19a. Detail of a crossette flower on the same mantel. MRF S-12127.

Church. Burnett, who died in 1761, arrived in Charleston about 1750, announcing himself as a "House and Ship-Carver from London." The bills compiled by the commissioners for the construction of St. Michael's contain itemized accounts of over £1,000 worth of carving executed by Burnett at various times between the summer of 1757 and the summer of 1760. Included were column capitals, entablatures, trusses, keystones, ceiling and portico ornaments, all the pulpit carving, and numerous other items including "56 Bracketts for the Stairs going up to the Galleries," for which Burnett received £1 each.³⁰ The magnificent stair carving of the Thomas Bee house at 94 Church street may also be the work of Burnett, although a definitive attribution must await the removal of paint from some of the major carved elements.

Pompion Hill Chapel, constructed in 1763 on the eastern branch of the Cooper River northeast of Charleston, contains a carved pulpit long associated with the Charleston cabinetmaker William Axson. Since Axson is known to have been associated with the construction of the chapel, and his initials are in fact



Figure 19b. Detail of a plinth flower on the same mantel. MRF S-12127.

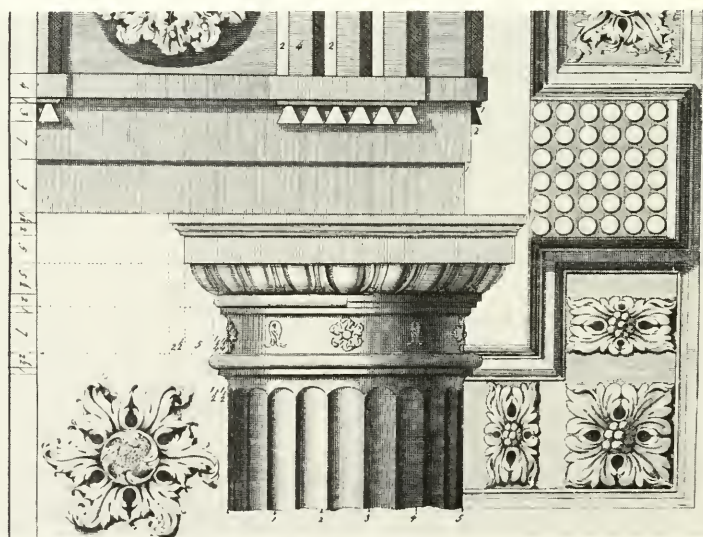


Figure 19c. A portion of Plate IV from Abraham Swan's *British Architect* of 1758.

cut into an exterior brick, this assumption is a logical one. Recent research by Brad Rauschenberg and Forsyth Alexander, however, indicate the possibility that there were two William Axsons, one of them a carpenter in St. Thomas' Parish where Pompion Hill is located. The pulpit and sounding board of Pompion Hill are academic and stylish in concept, indicating the possible use of a published design source by the builder/carver, but the actual execution of the carved torus molding at the base of the pulpit as well as the Corinthian capitals of the columns lack the depth and sculptural quality that would indicate the hand of an artisan formally trained as a carver.



Figure 20. The Miles Brewton house, 27 King Street, completed 1769, east or front facade. MRF S-12126. (NOTE: for this and each of the buildings following, the initial MRF number listed includes all illustrations of each particular building.)

The most important instance of Low Country carving that can be associated with a Charleston carver by documentation is the Miles Brewton house (Fig.20) at 27 King Street in the city. A five-bay brick "double" house with a full classical portico, the

Brewton house is rightly considered to be one of America's finest surviving townhouses of the colonial period. Its interiors are the most highly detailed in Charleston. A notice placed in at least two Charleston newspapers in August, 1769, Ezra Waite's only known advertisement, proves to be a revealing source regarding both the design and ornamentation of major portions of Brewton's sumptuous dwelling:

EZRA WAITE, Civil Architect, House-builder in general, and Carver, from LONDON/ Has finished the architecture, conducted the execution thereof, viz, in the joiner way, all tabernacle frames, (but that in the dining-room excepted) and carved all the said work in the four principle rooms; and also calculated, adjusted, and draw'd at large for to work by, the Ionick entablature, and carved the same in the front and round the eaves, of MILES BREWTON, Esquire's House, on *White-Point*, for Mr. MONCRIEFF.³¹

Richard Moncrieff was a contractor who had advertised as early as 1749 that he would "do all the carpenter's and joiner's work in any . . . building."³² He evidently served as the general contractor for Brewton's house, the construction of which was completed shortly before Waite's advertisement. Waite's own notice, in fact, has caused confusion in various published sources on Charleston architecture. The slightly obtuse language of the advertisement has caused several authors to credit Waite with the design and execution of all the ornamental woodwork gracing both the interior and exterior of the house. Waite, in fact, has been suggested as the architect of the entire interior of the building, but his own claims are far more modest. It is evident from his advertisement that his interior work was confined to the "tabernacle frames"—that is, door and window architraves, with their accompanying cornices or pediments, "in the four principal rooms." The overmantel of a chimneypiece also could have been considered to represent a tabernacle. Waite asserted that he had "finished the architecture" of these elements, that is, drawn them up, and had "conducted the execution thereof, viz, in the joiner way" of these frames. In other words, he had overseen the finish carpenters who made up the tabernacles in preparation for carving, with the exception of "that in the dining-room." Waite further insisted that he had "carved all the said work"—the

tabernacles — “in the four principle rooms.” Since the Brewton house contains eight rooms and two stair halls, there is some question concerning what Waite considered to be the “four principle rooms.” Based upon finish detail and particularly the carved tabernacle frames, a logical assumption for these rooms would be the first floor stair passage, the two first floor front rooms, and ostensibly the second floor parlor. Even though the parlor is the major room of the house, however, there is physical evidence, as we shall see, that Waite was by no means responsible for all of the carving there. In regard to his work in the dining room, Waite introduced a note of confusion later in his advertisement. He noted that because the “dining-room is of a new construction, with respect to the finishing of windows and doorways,” he had been accused of not rendering “the architecture” and conducting “the execution thereof.” Instead, Waite asserted that he had done so, which is an apparent conflict with his earlier statement that he had overseen the joiners’ work on the tabernacle frames “but that in the dining-room excepted.” It may be that his reference to “new construction” was Waite’s manner of suggesting that someone else had seen to the “execution” of the dining room architraves and door head. It is thought that the dining room was the first floor northeast room,³³ the doorway of which has a pulvinated frieze which contrasts with the flat friezes of the door heads that can be documented as Waite’s work. In any event, it is clear that Waite claimed no responsibility for having done work encompassing more than certain interior door and window frames and the exterior entablature on the portico (Fig. 21) and around the body of the house, as he indicated by “round the eaves.” Whether or not Waite considered the overmantels to be tabernacle frames is unknown, but an examination of these features shows certain stylistic contrasts with the carving of the door frames that indeed can be documented to Waite based on his own description of the work.

Waite remains something of a mysterious figure. It may be that he had arrived from England after the construction of the Brewton house had begun. In his 1769 advertisement, Waite noted that he had “twenty-seven years experience, both in theory and practice, in noblemen and gentlemen’s seats,” and he flattered himself that he could “give satisfaction to any gentleman, either by plans, sections, elevations, or executions, at his house in *King-Street*, next door to Mr. *Wainwright’s*.” At that location, he was prepared to teach architecture “by a peculiar method

never published in any book extant.” This claim is certainly consistent with other Charleston carving of the period, most of which was designed by the artisans themselves, as we have seen.



Figure 21. Detail of the Brewton portico entablature.

A search of records in London has failed to unearth significant information about Waite's English career. One scant entry in the apprentice records of the Public Records Office in London recorded that an Ezra Waite, "Carver in Carlisle," took one "Jos. Patinson" as an apprentice on 19 November 1755 for the consideration of £20.³⁴ This may have been the same individual, but Carlisle is far north of London, close to the Scottish border. In any event, Waite did not long survive the completion of his work in the Brewton house. He made his will on 12 October 1769, and the document was proved less than a month later. A portion of the will directed that the "Residue" of the estate and all the "Goods and Chattels" be sold, and the proceeds remitted to Waite's "Cousin Mr. Moses Waite of the City of London," who was to disperse the funds among Waite's "Nearest Relations that may then be alive."³⁵ Moses Waite may have been a mason whose yard was situated in Southwark; this individual is recorded as having taken an apprentice in 1760.³⁶

Of considerable interest to students of architectural carving is the estate inventory of Ezra Waite, taken 29 November 1769.

One of the appraisers was Thomas Woodin, another Charleston carver who had emigrated from London. Contained in Waite's effects were eight books of architecture and Chippendale's *Director*, along with sundry items of finished work, five slaves, and a modest amount of household furniture. A listing of carving on hand included such things as a "Carved Chimney piece in the Gothic Taste Complete," a pair of "Side Brackets for a Chimney piece," various Ionic and Corinthian pilasters with their capitals, "2 Trophys of Music," and a number of other pieces



Figure 22. North door of the first floor southeast room of the Brewton house.



Figure 22a. Detail of a frieze appliqué in Figure 22.



Figure 22b. Detail of acanthus carving and the architrave in Figure 22.

of carved work. No tools were listed, but among Waite's possessions were "2 paper port follos with sundry paterns and 2 large Rolls of different sketches" The sale of these effects, along with the tools which had not been inventoried, was held on 6 December 1769. All of Waite's effects, including the slaves and "several Pieces of curious carved Work" were to be auctioned.³⁷

Although Waite remains a somewhat shadowy artisan to us, his documentable work in the Brewton house is revealing, and provides a significant link with the Sommers carver, as we shall see. Unfortunately, the Brewton house contains the only carving in Charleston which we may firmly attribute to Ezra Waite at this time.

One of the “tabernacle frames” in the Brewton house that may be documented as the work of Waite is the elaborate passage door (Fig. 22) of the first floor southeast room. The head of this door is composed of a full entablature supported by large consoles that flank the crossting of the carved ovolo backband of the architrave. The entire construction is a solidly Baroque interpretation of the Palladian style, the theme of which is broken only by the Gothic strapwork of the frieze—a device that is unusual enough to suspect that perhaps Mr. Waite had arrived at its design by his own “peculiar method” of architecture. Waite’s familiarity with this style is certainly evident in the “Carved Chimney piece in the Gothic Taste Complete” listed in his inventory. Similar Gothic elements are repeated elsewhere



Figure 23. Detail of a metope flower on the entablature of the Brewton first floor passage.

in the house, particularly the dining room and parlor, though the execution is different. Some of the details of this doorway, of course, are standard carver's designs, such as the cable molding in the center of the consoles and the alternating panels of strapwork and flowers on the backband of the architrave; both of these elements, with variations, show elsewhere in the building. The upturned acanthus leaves below the consoles (Fig. 22b) best reveal Waite's carving style. While the flow of the work is good, the modeling of the leafage is a bit tentative and not particularly imaginative, and except for the overlaps, is somewhat flat.



Figure 24. Detail of a cornice frieze on the exterior of the Brewton house entry.

Though Waite did not claim credit for the entablature of the first floor passage, the metope flowers of the frieze (Fig. 23) show similarities to the preceding doorway in both modeling and the shaping of leaf profiles. Here the veining of the leaves is coarser, very likely due to the fact that the flowers were far above the floor level. Each of the principle leaves has a deep veiner cut radiating from the central flower. This detail is evident even through heavy layers of paint on the metopes of the exterior portico (Fig. 24), carving which is documented to Waite. This deep veiner cut is also apparent in a vertical leaf just to the left of the principle volute of the mahogany stair brackets in the hall (Fig. 25). The leaf modeling of these brackets, including the combination of cuts used to suggest a twisted leaf-end (the small leaf in the bottom center of the bracket) provide further evidence of first-floor work that may be attributed to Waite, whose style is somewhat fussy and naive. Other carved work on the first floor, including various moldings and overmantel flowers, shows the hand of another carver.

Evidence of two other carvers at work in the Brewton house may be found in the second floor parlor, which is one of the most



Figure 25. Stair bracket, Brewton first floor passage.

elaborate rooms in America. An often-quoted description of the Brewton house by Josiah Quincy made reference to "The grandest hall I ever beheld," which was dressed with "azure blue satin window curtains" and "rich blue paper with gilt, mashee borders" Since Quincy had "Dined with considerable company"³⁸ during the course of his visit to the house, we might well suspect that Brewton had chosen the large parlor for the repast. The flat panels of the room would have been suited to the "rich blue paper" replete with gilt papier-maché borders, an elegant treatment much in vogue in London at the time. The first floor dining room walls have panels with raised fields that would not have lent themselves to such a finish. Further, Quincy's use of the word "hall" implies a room of large size. It is also interesting to note that several Charleston inventories of the eighteenth century make reference to second floor parlors being used as dining rooms, judging from the presence of plate in those documents. None of this, however, provides evidence of any fixed use for Brewton's parlor.

Scarcely any architectural element of the Brewton parlor was left unornamented. Two massive doorways in the Corinthian order with broken pitch pediments (Figs. 26, 26a) suggest in the stiff style of the acanthus leafage and execution of some architectural moldings, the work of the second carver. The moldings are not as cleanly carved as those of Waite's architraves on the first floor. The soffit flowers, particularly those contained in the strapwork under the architraves of the door entablatures, are closely related to flowers set within the crosssetted frames of the first floor overmantels. The same hand is evident as well in the elaborate entablature of this room (Figs. 27, 27a). The frieze surmounting



Figure 26. North door, Brewton second floor southeast parlor.

the awesomely deep ceiling vault above the entablature (Fig.28) contains Gothic fretwork much in the style which Waite employed on the first floor, though the finish of some details such as the acorns is different. The frieze compositions have a particularly close affinity to the design of the portico, and it is likely that Waite had a hand in both designing and overseeing at least some of the carving in this room. Making a precise determination of the stylistic ties between the parlor and the documentable carving



Figure 26a. Detail of the entablature of Figure 26.

on the first floor will necessitate a greater degree of detailed photography and possibly further removal of paint from carved moldings in the parlor.

The second carver's work also may be seen on the carved moldings of the parlor overmantel (Fig. 29). The mantel itself is marble, almost certainly fabricated abroad, and the same is true of two mantels in the first floor front rooms. Carved marble mantels, in fact, were a common commodity in colonial



Figure 27. Room entablature, Brewton second floor southeast parlor.



Figure 27a. Detail of Figure 27.

Charleston. The origin of the Brewton mantels may very well be documented by the contemporary advertisement of John Rainier, who in the fall of 1767 offered “A Parcel of ITALIAN Marble CHIMNEY PIECES Of the newest fashion” Such elements were available in the city much earlier, in fact; James Crokatt advertised “A Marble Chimney Piece compleat” in 1738.³⁹ More important to our study, however, is the carving on both sides of the frieze of the overmantel (Fig. 29a), each consisting of the



Figure 28. Frieze at the spring point of the Brewton parlor ceiling vault.

head of a snarling Rococo bird erupting from a body of foliate scrollwork. These birds are attributed to the Sommers carver, and as the two most important pieces of carving in the Brewton house, it is possible that Moncrieff had bespoke this work from yet a third carver due to their complexity. There is little to suggest about the work of either Waite or the second Brewton house carver that either artisan could have executed these pieces so competently. That is not to say that the other carving in the house is by any means crude, but the strong movement and sculptural quality required to make the two birds successful is lacking in the other carving. While Waite's carving is reasonably competent, it could not be compared favorably with the best class of London work, despite Waite's claims of long experience in the trade there. It is possible that London was nothing more than a point of departure for Waite, and that his career had been confined largely to the shires. His possible residence in Carlisle, noted earlier, is lent somewhat greater significance in this light. It was nothing unusual for British artisans arriving in the colonies to announce themselves with considerable puffery. A "London" connection was most desirable to parade before prospective American patrons, even if a tradesman's sojourn in that great center in reality had spanned no more than a few days.



Figure 29. *Chimneypiece, Brewton house parlor.*

This overmantel ornament is a more fully-developed Rococo composition than most of the carving in the Sommers house. Like the work done by the Sommers carver for the John Stuart house

and the Peter Bocquet house, both of which are illustrated in this article, these Brewton overmantel appliqués are some of the most modish of the Sommers carver's work. The use of naturalistic leafage and flowers, along with the rustic cluster of rocks, is closer to London Rococo styles of the period than the more sedate Sommers house work. The leaves surrounding the blooms, though they are softened by the amount of paint which covers them, may be compared favorably with similar foliage in the Bocquet house (Fig. 34a) Nevertheless, the rounded quality of the profiles of the leafage, like that of the Sommers house, suggests an earlier working vocabulary.



Figure 29a. Detail of frieze carving of the Brewton overmantel in Figure 29.



Figure 29b. Plinth carving, Brewton parlor overmantel.

Also attributed to the Sommers carver are the two pairs of floral S-scrolls, somewhat in the form of trusses, flanking the pilaster plinths at the base of the Brewton parlor overmantel (Fig. 29b). Further, some of the carved moldings on the overmantel, particularly the cove molding immediately above the appliqué birds (Fig. 29a), may be the work of the Sommers carver, though again the heavy deposit of paint present makes a precise attribution difficult. In any event, the hand of at least three carvers is evident in the Brewton house, which is not surprising in view of the enormous diversity and quantity of carving needed to complete the interiors. Since we are able to identify at least a significant portion of the work of Waite, we are left with the dilemma of identifying the other artisans who worked in this exceptional dwelling. The somewhat less stylish work of the carver who completed most of the entablatures, doorways, and other such work in the Brewton parlor remains without attribution for the present. However, the work of the Sommers carver, who of the three carvers working for Moncrieff employed a style that was closest to English quality, may well be the work of one of two London carvers who evidently emigrated to Charleston only a few years before Ezra Waite. The arrival of these men, along with Waite, is a remarkable coincidence which unquestionably made a very significant impact on the city's interior architecture at the end of the colonial period.

One of these two men was Thomas Woodin, who as we have seen was called upon to assist with Waite's estate inventory. Woodin was a carver well established in the London trade before emigrating to the Low Country. Though the precise date of his arrival is unknown, he was in Charleston as early as 1764. Very little is known of Woodin's career in London, but he was certainly established on his own by 1746, when the indenture records for that year record that Thomas "Wooding," carver and gilder, who was located in St. James', Westminster, took Samuel Norman as an apprentice for a premium of 15 guineas. Norman, who completed his indenture in 1753, became one of London's principle carvers and cabinetmakers by the end of the 1750's. With starting capital secured from an uncle, the successful cabinetmaker William Hallett, Norman joined in partnership with artisans such as James Whittle and, briefly, John Mayhew, to develop one of the largest cabinetmaking and upholstery operations in the city. In 1762 he was appointed "Sculptor and Carver to their Majesties; and Surveyor of the curious Carvings in Windsor Castle."⁴⁰ The

“curious Carvings” were the work of the seventeenth century artisan Grinling Gibbons. “Curious,” in this particular eighteenth century application, meant “elegant” rather than “peculiar.” Norman was bankrupt by 1767, but his meteoric career, aside from his obvious success with financing, is an interesting commentary on the skills he presumably acquired from Thomas Woodin.

Woodin is known to have taken other apprentices as well. He took Henry Brook the same year that Norman was indented, and in 1755 William Bishop and William Powell (or Porsell) were bound.⁴¹ No doubt there were others. Woodin was still in London in 1760, the latest date found for him in England. In September of that year he was called in by the Duke of Bedford as an arbitrator to evaluate the “large Glass” which Woodin’s former apprentice, Samuel Norman, had made for the “Blue Parlor” at Woburn Abbey. Another appraiser in this matter was Paul Saunders, whose large Royal Tapestry Manufactory in Sutton Street had been purchased by Norman the previous spring. Bedford had objected to the size of the bill Norman had rendered for the glass, but he settled the account nevertheless.⁴² At the time, Bedford was engaged in what might have been assumed to be a fashionable redecoration of Woburn, but the pier glass that is evidently the one made for the “Blue Parlor” has a frame that is largely late Baroque in design. The same is true of an oval pier glass Norman made for Bedford at the same time; this glass shows influence from Italian Baroque examples, though Rococo embellishments have been added.⁴³

The next specific mention of Thomas Woodin was found in the *Journal* of the South Carolina governor’s council, where an entry for 2 July 1765 recorded that in a petition submitted by “John Woodin Thomas Woodin Elizabeth Woodin Rebecca Woodin & Ann Oxenham,” all the signators alleged that “they were Protestants Lately arrived in this Province.” The emigrants testified that they had come to South Carolina “on the encouragement of the Bounty,” evidently a cash enticement offered to encourage immigration. Although the exact nature of this bounty is unknown, it was passed by an act of the General Assembly on 25 July 1761. The council ordered that Woodin and the other individuals be allowed the bounty.⁴⁴ Elizabeth Woodin apparently was Thomas Woodin’s wife, and she was dead by 1773 or probably even earlier; John and Rebecca were his children. It is reasonable to assume that all of the petitioners were part of the Woodin

household, including Ann Oxenham. Even though the Woodins represented themselves in 1765 as "Lately arrived" in the province, they were in Charleston as early as the fall of the previous year, when Elizabeth and Rebecca Woodin announced in an advertisement of 22 October 1764 that they had "opened a SCHOOL for the tuition of YOUNG LADIES, in the most polite and useful branches of education, viz. both French and English, writing, needlework, and dancing" Their location was "the second house on the right hand of Queen-street," where they also proposed to take "Young Ladies and Little Masters as day-boarders." Two months later the Woodin ladies announced a move to "Meeting-street, near White-Point," where the same educational services were to continue; thanks were returned for "favours already received."⁴⁵

Woodin very likely had lost his wife by 1767, for in June of that year Rebecca Woodin advertised that she had "Removed from Meeting-Street" to White Point, the area of the city now at the bend where South Battery becomes East Battery. At that location, in a "healthful and convenient house of Mr. Dandridge's," Miss Woodin noted that she continued to "teach young Ladies, in the different branches of POLITE EDUCATION," including all of the skills she had previously taught in addition to arithmetic. She also offered a "room for HOUSE and DAY BOARDERS." Appended to the same advertisement was the notice of Thomas Woodin, "CARVER and CABINET-MAKER," who offered to teach DRAWING in all its Branches at the same location. Woodin also offered for sale "some curious mahogany work, viz. DESKS, and BOOK-CASES, with glass doors, ladies DRESSING-TABLES with all the necessary apparatus, Chinese Bamboo TEA-TABLES, and KITCHEN STANDS." These goods were "all London make." The same advertisement subsequently appeared in two other Charleston newspapers.⁴⁶

Though Woodin must have enjoyed a reasonably brisk trade in London for at least part of his career, establishing his trade in a colonial city was not immediately attendant with much time for leisure, judging from a well-composed letter which Woodin sent to the Society of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce in London in 1766. Enclosing a collection of plant cuttings and seeds to Dr. Templeman, secretary of the Society, Woodin lamented that "'I wish my finances were Equal to my Wishes. I would send many things to England, such as Sasofras, Sarsasparilla . . . with Sundry Others, But having no Negroes and Obliged to work for

Substance am dissinabled from pesuing [sic] so necessary a Plan.” Woodin provided a concise description of the flora which he enclosed, but hoped that the Society would “look over any imperfection” in his discussion of the samples which he sent.⁴⁷ During this period, Woodin must have been grateful for the additional income which the family teaching skills provided. Both his custom and his fortunes, however, were soon to advance.

In the late 1760's, South Carolina's new State House was in the process of completion after an exceedingly extended period of construction. The cornerstone had been laid in 1753, but it was not until 1768 that the building committee was able to “examine the accounts of the Workmen” who were “employed in finishing and Compleating the State House.” Among the accounts was a statement from “Thomas Woodin, for Carving 16 Corinthian Capitals for the Council Chamber.” The bill was for £471:18:0, but a deduction of £13:12 was made for “a remainder of Wood,” leaving a balance owed Woodin of £458:6:0. Significantly, the “Wood” evidently was part of the “New England Pine Plank for the Carver” supplied the committee by merchant David Stoddard for the sum of £55:17:19, as mentioned earlier.⁴⁸ The survival of these capitals would have provided a fine document of Woodin's carving style, but the State House was “reduced . . . to a pile of ruins” in a disastrous fire during the winter of 1788. The building had cost over 59,000 pounds sterling, an enormous sum even for Charleston.⁴⁹

Little else regarding Woodin's career in Charleston is known, but it is believed that even though he had billed himself as a cabinetmaker, he was primarily a carver. Thomas Elfe's account book noted the sum of £97 due Elfe by “Thomas Wooding” in January of 1768,⁵⁰ but the nature of the services rendered by Elfe's shop to Woodin are unknown. By the summer of 1772, Woodin had been appointed Weigher and Gauger for the customs office of the Port of Charleston.⁵¹ During 1772 and 1773, and no doubt earlier as well, Woodin steadily acquired land on both sides of the Edisto River in Colleton and Berkeley Counties. His land purchases eventually comprised over five thousand acres, at least half of which was comprised of inexpensive low ground surrounding the river. In August, 1773, he made what appears to have been his last land purchase, acquiring 1000 acres on Saltcatcher Swamp in Colleton County for a mere £10, and in the deed for this land Woodin was described as a “gentleman

of Charles Town.”⁵² During the same year he took a mortgage on 150 acres in Granville County and 632 acres on Johns Island, all land owned by his son John, who subsequently paid off over £482 to clear the mortgage.⁵³ On 25 March 1773, two weeks before this mortgage agreement was signed, Woodin made his will, devising to his son “John Ash” 1337 acres of land in Colleton County “on and Near Edisto River between the Saw Mills and Werts Ferry,” along with an additional 150 acres in Granville County, a “Negroe Wench named Dinah,” and all of his “Waring Apparel . . . together with [his] Household furniture and Working Tools” In the document, Woodin took the opportunity to forgive his son “for His Past Misconduct.” Nevertheless, Woodin’s daughter Rebecca evidently was the favored child, for she was left his watch, £650, all of the “French Books,” three blacks, and 2120 acres in Berkeley County. An additional 1600 acres were left John Wragg in England “as a Reward for the many friendly Offices” which Wragg had done for Woodin in that country. Wragg was Woodin’s “Godson and nephew,” and the son of Joseph Wragg, Jr.⁵⁴ The latter, also a resident of London, was the son of the exceedingly wealthy Charleston merchant Joseph Wragg, Sr. Woodin seemingly had married Joseph Wragg, Jr.’s sister, and Wragg was in fact described as Woodin’s “brother in law” in the will, though details regarding such a union have not been found. Wragg had a sister by the name of Elizabeth, but she married Peter Manigault. Family relationships were often loosely described in eighteenth century documents; it may be that Waite meant something like “step-brother” for “brother-in-law.” In any event, it was probably the Wragg connection which had initially encouraged Woodin to emigrate to Charleston. Architecture was certainly one pastime pursued by the family; Joseph Wragg, Sr., at the time of his death in 1751, owned at least a half-dozen books of architecture, including Colen Campbell’s three-volume *Vitruvius Britannicus* of 1715. The elder Wragg’s grandson, Gabriel Manigault, was later well known for his architectural proclivities.⁵⁵

The *South-Carolina and American General Gazette* for 29 July 1774 recorded the death of “Mr. Thomas Woodin, Weigher and Gauger for this Port.” Woodin’s death had actually occurred three days earlier. Ann Manigault, the wife of Gabriel Manigault I, tersely noted in her journal for 26 July 1774 that “Mr. Wooding died.”⁵⁶ The executors of Woodin’s estate, John Morris and Fenwicke Bull, advertised the sale “by public Outcry” of

Woodin's effects the following September. Included in the sale, which was to be held on the 16th, were six slaves, listed as "four men and Two Women," along with "sundry Articles of Household Furniture" and "Liquor bottled and in Casks." Later in September, Edward Oats & Co. advertised a second sale of Woodin's possessions which was to be held on the 30th of the month. Like the previous auction, the second sale was to be held "at the House of Mr. Thomas Woodin . . . on White-Point." The remainder of the household furniture, as well as "TOOLS, BOOKS, CLOATHS, and sundry other Articles too tedious to mention, brought from his Plantation near Edisto Saw-Mills" were to be sold.⁷⁷ Evidently John and Rebecca Woodin had chosen not to retain some of the items Woodin had willed to them, including slaves, clothing, books, and tools.

Although Woodin did not possess a fortune comparable to Humphrey Sommers, it is evident that he had enjoyed something of the same sort of mobility that the latter man did. Judging from his acquisition of land and appointment as a Customs officer, it may be that Woodin did not actively pursue his trade long after his completion of the prestigious State House job, but it is nevertheless significant that he retained his tools until his death. Unfortunately, no inventory of Woodin's estate remains to provide evidence of his trade activity at the time of his death. Woodin's daughter Rebecca, having been left with a good estate, remained in Charleston at least until 1783, when she advertised that she had "given up the Day School" but would board and educate "eight young Ladies and no more" at her house at "No. 109 in King street."⁷⁸ John Woodin was deceased by 1781, when his only child, a daughter also named Rebecca, sold a 632-acre tract on the Edisto which had been left to him by his father. It may have been this lady who evidently left the city at about that time with Charleston physician John de la Howe, who is said to have left his wife and children behind. Though described as de la Howe's "housekeeper" at "Lethe," his "elaborate plantation" far upcountry at New Bordeaux in the Abbeville District, this Rebecca Woodin's own estate contained silks, diamonds, and furs, suggesting a rather more intimate relationship with the good doctor.⁷⁹ It may be that this lady, in fact, was herself a result of her father's "Past Misconduct." Thomas Woodin's own daughter Rebecca, after engaging herself for so many years in the advancement of "polite education," hardly seems likely to have traipsed off with such *élán*.

The other London carver who seems a likely candidate as the Sommers carver was an artisan actually linked to Woodin in a rather complex way. Such things, however, were not unusual in the world of eighteenth century trades, where artisans predictably moved within patterns defined by trade employment and family liaisons. In that sense, Charleston was certainly an extension of Greater London.

In June, 1766, John Lord introduced himself as a “CARVER and GILDER, from LONDON,” when he announced that he had opened a shop in Church Street “opposite to Messrs. *Sheed and White’s* Store,” where he intended to “carry on the said Business in all its various Branches.” In this advertisement, Lord proudly announced that he had “had the Advantage of doing all the different Parts of his Business at the Shop of Mr. NORMAN, Carver and Gilder to his Majesty.” Lord offered for sale an “Assortment of Glasses with carved Frames” which he may well have brought from London, and stated that he would carry out regilding as well as silvering glasses, “nea[r?]ly as cheap as in London.”⁶⁰ One might well speculate upon how a journeyman from the huge establishment of Samuel Norman, a former apprentice of Thomas Woodin, had found his way to Charleston. Perhaps he had emigrated on the advice of Woodin himself. Lord proved to be formidable competition for other carvers during the ensuing nine years, however.

Six months after his first advertisement, Lord announced that he had “removed from Church-street in to Meeting-street, opposite to Mr. Holliday’s Tavern,” where he returned “Thanks to the Gentlemen and Ladies for their past Favours.” Early in 1767, Lord married Margaret Broun, the orphan of Charleston physician Robert Broun, who had moved to Goose Creek, where he was twice elected to the Royal Assembly before his death in 1757.⁶¹ In May of 1767, Lord advertised that he had imported in the ship *London* a “Large assortment of *LOOKING-GLASSES*,” which he would sell either with or without frames. At his shop in Meeting Street, he would carry out “gilding and all branches of house and furniture carving, in the Chinese, French, and Gothic tastes.” In this notice, he extended the description of his trade experience, stating that he had received “many advantages . . . from the best shops in London” and was therefore “capable of executing any ornaments in the above tastes.”⁶² In an advertisement placed during the summer of 1768, Lord was quite specific regarding the nature of the “ornaments”

he would execute. Carving "both in the house and furniture way" were carried on in the shop,

viz. pier glasses of all kinds, chimney glasses, gerandoles, picture frames, console brackets for bustos and chimney pieces, stair case brackets, ionic, corinthian and composite capitals, trusses, moldings of various different patterns, with every kind of ornaments proper for decorating the insides of rooms, in the French, Chinese, and Gothic tastes; all which he will engage to execute in a workmanlike manner, on as low terms as possible.

Lord again offered imported looking glasses, "chiefly large, with carved frames, gilt and white, in the newest taste," which may well have been Neoclassical in style. At this time, the shop was described as being situated on Meeting Street "near opposite to *Egerton Leigh, Esqrs.*" The same basic advertisement was run at least through February, 1769.⁶³

Lord took several apprentices during his sojourn in Charleston. In 1771 he advertised that he would "... take a BOY of good credible Parents, as an APPRENTICE." Typically of many eighteenth century trade masters, Lord did not always enjoy a pleasant working relationship with his lads. Of his three known apprentices, William Lawrence, Henry Hainsdorff, and Joseph Parkinson, the first-mentioned proved on at least one occasion to be a problem. In March, 1769, Lawrence was convicted of "Subborn refractory behavior" toward Lord, and was "committed to the Warden of the Work-house for the space of two months ... to be kept at Work and hard Labour." A little more than a week after his conviction, however, Lawrence "represented his sorrow of his said offence" to the Governor, Lord Charles Greville Montague, who pardoned him based upon Lawrence's "Humble Petition" as well as "the request of ... John Lord his said Master."⁶⁴

One of John Lord's most prestigious jobs in Charleston was a new altar for St. Michael's Church. Even though the church was in use by 1761, a finished altar had not been installed as late as 1771. In 1762, the St. Michael's building commissioners heard a proposal from Charleston carver Anthony Forehand for "Carveing and Imbelishment of the alterpiece," but this was rejected.⁶⁵ In May, 1771, "Several Plans for a New Alter Piece were laid before the Vestry for their Approbation by Mr. John

Lord Carver; & Mr. John Alwood, Painter; one of which was fixd upon” The following month, an estimate for the job was presented. Lord was to receive £360 for carving, Alwood £550 for “Painting & Gilding,” and “Mr. Nayler” — William Rigby Naylor — estimated £220 for “Carpenters Work,” the total amounting to £1130, a sum which the vestry “thought too Considerable without the help of a Subscription” In January of the following year “Several Designs for a new Altar Peice” were again examined by the vestry, and a new estimate for what presumably was John Lord’s design previously “fixd upon” was submitted. In the second proposal, the sums to be paid Lord and Alwood remained the same, but the carpentry had risen to £400, and was to be done by Benjamin Baker. Surprisingly, the new estimate was accepted.⁶⁶ Despite the sum expended, it appears that the vestry had every reason to be satisfied with the result. In 1820, Rev. Frederick Dalcho, then assistant minister at St. Michael’s, described the chancel and its attendant altar as “. . . handsome . . . ornamented in a neat and appropriate manner. It is a pannelled wainscot, with four Corinthian Pilasters supporting the proper cornice. The usual Tables of the Decalogue, Lord’s Prayer, and Apostles’ Creed, are placed between them.”⁶⁷ Rev. Dalcho was modest in his description. Through examination of various eighteenth and nineteenth century painters’ bills, George W. Williams, in his excellent history *St. Michael’s, Charleston, 1751-1951*, was able to determine a good deal more about the appearance of the altar. The “Tables” or tablets were paired on each side of the altar, and were fitted in gilt frames with gilt lettering; a gilt cherub’s head replete with wings adorned the top of each of the four frames. A half-dome over the altar was painted blue behind billowing clouds, representing the firmament. The upper portion of the dome contained a “glory,” or beams of sunlight, gilt and presumably composed of either carved or flat appliques radiating into the dome. It was not until 1774 that this detail was completed; the vestry minutes for 15 August of that year recorded that the vestry “. . . desired Mr. Lord to have the Glory over the Altar Piece gilded”⁶⁸ Several British architectural books of the first half of the eighteenth century illustrate altar designs similar to this reconstructed description.

Like Woodin’s State House capitals, Lord’s 1772 altar in St. Michael’s might have provided clear “signatures” of his carving to use for comparative purposes. While St. Michael’s was not

subjected to the sort of devastation visited upon the State House, the building was indeed severely damaged during the Federal shelling of the city in 1865. During that year, a description of the "shocking scene of desolation" inside the church revealed that "several shells . . . entered the roof," one of them landing in "the East end of the Chancel, which tore off and knocked down the whole interior of the same, with the gilded tablets containing the Ten Commandments, the Belief, and the Lord's Prayer, exploding at the same time, and sinking into the pavement of the Altar" This shell also destroyed a number of pews, "bursting out the panels of the Pulpit"⁶⁹ which Henry Burnett had carved. Though damaged, the pulpit survived largely intact, much in contrast with the splintered devastation of John Lord's carving.

In 1773, Lord was elected as secretary of the St. George's Society. Joshua Lockwood was president, and Arthur Downes was junior warden; both of these men called themselves clockmakers, but were principally retailers.⁶⁰ In May of the same year, the month following this honor, Lord announced that he had "removed to the House lately occupied by Mr. *Thomas Doughty*, exactly opposite to his old Shop in Meeting-Street." He had received "a Quantity of the very best *Vauxhall* Plates (for square and oval Glasses)" from London. Vauxhall looking glass plates had beveled edges, and were quite expensive. The "House and Shop . . . Lately occupied by Mr. John Lord" were offered for lease the following summer.⁷¹ In November of 1773, Lord again advertised his Vauxhall plates, along with "A Consignment of elegant and most fashionable Pier Frames, Girandoles with and without Glasses, with double and treble Branches" He continued to offer "Carving and Gilding, in all their Branches, done in the newest Taste"⁷² This is the last advertisement found for Lord.

Other than the vestry of St. Michael's, John Lord's other patrons remain anonymous with the exception of cabinetmaker Thomas Elfe. In his shop account for March, 1773, Elfe recorded that £6 had been paid "Jno. Lord for Carving," not a particularly large sum in inflated South Carolina currency. Earlier in the same month, for example, Elfe had paid "William Crips Carver" £38.10. In August, 1774 Elfe's shop accounts indicate £3.10 paid Lord for unspecified services.⁷³ This entry constitutes the last known trade record of John Lord in Charleston. A little over a half-year later, a notice in the *South-Carolina Gazette and Country*

Journal for 28 March 1775 noted that Mr. John Lord, among other individuals, “sailed for London.”

Since there is no further record of Lord in Charleston, it has been surmised that he may have permanently returned to England due to Loyalist sympathies. However, this may not have been the case. No post-1775 record for Lord has been found in Britain, but there is evidence that he may have returned to the Low Country and become a planter. A John Lord advertised in a Charleston newspaper in the spring of 1783 that a “negro fellow of the Guinea country” had come to his plantation about two years previously. This John Lord invited the owner of this slave to apply to him “in Amelia,” that is, Amelia Township on the Santee River northwest of Charleston. This man was deceased by January of 1797, when a vendue of “About 20 Valuable Negroes, In Families, belonging to the Estate of JOHN LORD, Esq. deceased” was advertised in Charleston by the executors, Colcock and Paterson.⁷⁴ The link between the planter in Amelia and the former carver John Lord may well lie in an announcement of 30 November 1797: “Married, on Tuesday evening last, Mr. John Nowell, to Miss Mary Lord, daughter of John Lord, esq., deceased, both of this city.” As it happens, the register of St. Philip’s Parish in Charleston recorded the baptism of Mary Lord, the daughter of John and Margaret Lord, on 4 April 1773.⁷⁵ Further evidence that the planter and the carver may have been the same man is the fact that Margaret Broun Lord died 31 May 1822, and the record of her death date did not indicate that she was not a resident of South Carolina. This information is recorded in an early Bible associated with the White family of Charleston. Below a listing of the marriage of John and Margaret Lord in the same source is a listing for Richard Lord, who was born 13 February 1768, a few days less than a year after the 19 February 1767 marriage of John Lord. This appears to imply that Richard Lord was the son of John Lord. In any event, Richard Lord married Maria Lord, “his cousin, daughter of Andrew Lord” on 2 December 1798.⁷⁶ If Richard Lord was the son of John Lord, this entry suggests that Andrew Lord, a merchant of Charleston, may have been either a brother or cousin of the carver. The firm of Andrew and George Lord was paid over £336 for mahogany by Thomas Elfe’s shop in 1775; during 1773-1774, this mercantile firm imported eleven cargoes containing slaves, on which they paid a duty of over £10,000, indicating a sizeable business.⁷⁷ Some of these details suggest the possibility that John Lord returned

from England at least by 1781 and gave over the carver's trade to become an "esquire" on an upriver plantation, not unlike Thomas Woodin's venture into similar pursuits. Further research on the John Lord in Amelia Township may corroborate this.

John Lord's name apparently remained quite well known in Charleston, in fact, well after his departure from the city. Two years after Lord sailed for London, John Parkinson, carver and gilder, proudly announced himself in an advertisement placed in June, 1777, as the "Late Apprentice to Mr. JOHN LORD." The fact that Parkinson was introducing himself as Lord's "Late Apprentice" even suggests the possibility that Lord may have returned to Charleston by that time. During the previous year, 1776, Henry Hainsdorff had taken the "Opportunity to inform the Publick" that he proposed to carry on the businesses of "House, Ship and Coach Carver," and noted that he had "worked as a Journeyman three Years with Mr. John Lord." William Lawrence evidently shook off his former "Subborn refractory behavior" and opened his own establishment as early as 1774, but he did not bask in his former master's reputation in his own announcement of 9 August 1774. Instead, he loftily informed the public that he had taken the "Opportunity of seeing the present Taste in London, as it is now executed" ⁷⁸ Since Lawrence was operating on his own a year before Lord sailed away, it seems logical to assume that he was the first of Lord's apprentices in Charleston.

Lawrence, in his 1774 advertisement, billed himself as a carver and gilder. His establishment was located at "his House in Beresford's Alley, next to Edward Rutledge." He had acquired a "Variety" of looking glass plates "for Pier, Gerandole, and Dressing Frames." ⁷⁹ Nothing else is known of Lawrence's career in Charleston. Four years after the advertisement, the fate of two William Lawrences was made known by Charleston newspapers. The *Gazette of the State of South Carolina* for 8 July 1778 reported on a group of South Carolina citizens who had "embarked for the West-Indies, with as much of the property they had acquired here as they could carry." These people preferred to continue "under a slavish subjection to the oppressive government of declining Britain" In other words, they were Loyalists. Among the group was a William Lawrence. Another Charleston newspaper, the *South-Carolina & American General Gazette*, had reported the death of "Mr. William Lawrence" on 26 February 1778. This individual, who was deemed "a worthy, honest man,"

died after a "lingering illness." It is tempting to suspect that the William Lawrence who fled to the West Indies was Lord's former apprentice, but that is not known for a fact.

The other two lads that are known to have worked under Lord both remained in Charleston, where they continued to work until almost the close of the century. Henry Hainsdorff opened his own establishment in 1776 "in the last Brick House" on the "upper End of Queen street." At that time, he was already married; the register of St. Philip's recorded the baptism of a daughter of Henry and Margaret Hainsdorff on 20 September of the same year. At some point during the 1780's, Hainsdorff acquired property in Ansonborough, lot number 9 on Hasell Street, where he evidently had his residence. Jacob Milligan's city directory, however, listed him in the 1790's as a carver at two different Hasell Street addresses, 15 (1790) and 14 (1794). Between 1786 and 1788, Hainsdorff was paid on several occasions by the Independent Congregational Church for various sorts of "Carvers work," including ornamentation of the pulpit. Hainsdorff was buried at St. Philip's on 20 September 1796. His inventory of February, 1797, listed "1 lot carved Work" worth eight shillings, "2 Chests of Carvers Tools" valued at 100 shillings, and a workbench among a modest collection of household wares, in all worth only slightly over £23. Hainsdorff, in fact, was in debt at the time of his death, for his property on Hasell Street was sold to clear a judgment which William Hasell Gibbes had rendered against his estate. The sale of Hainsdorff's personal property, including "a Quantity of CARVERS TOOLS, CARVED WORK of different kinds . . . " was to be held on 27 March 1797.⁸⁰

While Henry Hainsdorff appears to have worked by himself, and was in substantial financial difficulty by the time of his death, John Parkinson seems to have fared somewhat better for at least part of his carving career. Parkinson's history before his apprenticeship to John Lord is unknown. We might recall that an Ezra Waite, perhaps the same man as the Charleston carver, had taken a "Jos. Patinson" as an apprentice to the carver's trade in Carlisle, England in 1755. The likelihood of a relationship between Joseph "Patinson" and John Parkinson is remote, but the coincidence is interesting. In any event, Parkinson's first establishment was at a "House in Tradd-street, two Doors above Mr. Charles Warham's," where, as his 1777 notice indicated, he was prepared to carry on "Carving and Gilding in all their various Branches, both in the Furniture, House and Coach Way." A little less than

a year later he advertised from the same address that he continued "to make frames either for looking glasses, pictures, girandoles, etc." and continued as well to "mend and whiten" frames for the above, along with "putting up and taking down" pier glasses and girandoles, as well as both packing and unpacking the same. In the early fall of 1780, Parkinson was still located on Tradd, listing his address as "No.60"; he again offered his former services in framing, and noted as well that "Cabinet and Coach makers" could "depend that all work of theirs, sent to him" would "be done in the neatest manner and quickest dispatch." Still advertising from 60 Tradd Street, in one 1781 notice Parkinson was more specific about various sorts of carving he would execute in "House, Ship, Coach, or Cabinet" applications. He continued his usual frame work, offering "black Frames, or Frames with carved and gilt Edges; dressing swing Glasses made, or Toilet Glasses with Drawers for Ladies Commodes." Evidently the British occupation of May, 1780, until December, 1782, didn't hinder Parkinson from pursuing his trade. In fact, the presence of the British fleet enabled him to obtain materials; he advertised in the *Royal Gazette* for 14 November 1781 that he had received a supply of gold leaf and would undertake "all Kind of GILDING WORK" at his Tradd Street shop.⁸¹ Other Charleston artisans were not so fortunate, with their trade suffering or even failing during the course of the occupation. There is nothing to suggest, however, that Parkinson was a Loyalist.

Immediately following the Revolution, Parkinson relocated to "No. 3, in Moore-street, formerly Horlbeck's Alley," where he offered his usual services, with emphasis upon framing. Square or oval glasses were available, and frames "either mahogany or white, or painted in colours," and Parkinson also offered "bordering for rooms of any pattern, carved in wood," which he suggested was far superior to papier-maché, since the latter material was "a harbour for vermin" and could not be taken down. Orders "from the country" would be "immediately complied with." Parkinson apparently acquired the property on Moore Street at some point in the 1780's; in 1791 he mortgaged the lot, number "281 on the South side of Moore Street," for the sum of £600 to George Flagg. Both John Tobler's and Jacob Milligan's city directories listed him as "carver and gilder" or just "carver" on Moore Street from 1782 through 1794. Milligan listed Parkinson's address as "4 Moore Street" in 1790, and "5 Moore" in 1794. Parkinson began buying and selling land during

the 1780's; in 1785 Parkinson and his wife Catharine sold 300 acres on the Edisto River for £100 sterling. The couple sold an additional 100 acres on "Four Hole Swamp" in Berkeley County in 1793. By 1796, however, Parkinson's fortunes were waning. He was unable to repay the mortgage principle and interest due George Flagg from the deed of mortgage drawn in 1791. Flagg accordingly brought suit against Parkinson for the seizure and sale of Parkinson's property. In March, 1796, Flagg bought "two lots numbered 4 and 5 on Moore Street" for £515 sterling from the Sheriff of Charleston District.⁸² There is no further record of Parkinson's carving trade in the city, but Hrabowski's city directory for 1809 listed a John Parkinson, possibly the same man, as a "coach-trimmer" at 72 Church Street. Like Hainsdorff, Parkinson had ultimately fallen upon hard times, no doubt a victim of shifting tastes and technology. The fashion for fine architectural carving had passed in Charleston with the advent of the Neoclassical style and the development of far less expensive composition appliques.

The shops of two London artisans, Thomas Woodin and John Lord, then, were the establishments in Charleston which appear to have been best prepared to design and carve the most important of the city's Rococo interiors. In addition to the Sommers and Brewton houses, an additional seven houses contain work that has been attributed to the Sommers carver. These are the John Stuart house, the Peter Bocquet house, the John Edwards house, the Charles Elliott house, the Daniel Heyward (Heyward-Washington) house, Daniel Blake's tenements, and Hampton Plantation. Also closely related, and very likely the work of a journeyman associated with Woodin or Lord, are three additional dwellings, the John Fullerton house, the Jacob Motte, Jr. house, and the Robert Pringle house. A survey of this work serves as further illustration of the Sommers carver's style.

Near the Sommers house is the Stuart house at 106 Tradd Street (Fig. 30), one of the most academic of the pre-Revolutionary Charleston frame houses which have their long axis perpendicular to the street. This fine dwelling was originally the residence of John Stuart (1718-1779), a Scot who owned over 10,000 acres of land in the Low Country and had parlayed his Crown-appointed position as Superintendent of Indian Affairs into a considerable fortune before he found it necessary to flee the colony before the rapidly-rising political tide of 1775. Stuart had acquired the property, part of a block of land between Broad and Tradd Streets

known as the “Orange Garden,” from the silversmith, Alexander Petrie, in February, 1767. Stuart signed a mortgage with Petrie for the £5,600 purchase price of the land. Part of the lot upon which Stuart built his house, in fact, had been purchased from Petrie the previous December, and was included in the mortgage of the larger parcel. Petrie himself had advanced well beyond the ranks of the “mechanicks,” having “acquired a handsome



Figure 30. The John Stuart house, 106 Tradd Street, 1767-1772, south or front elevation. MRF S-12121.

Fortune” through various investments. His obituary of 1768 observed that he had “some Time ago retired from Business,”⁸³ a familiar pattern in Charleston as we have seen.

The Stuart house is not a true single house, since it is a side-hall plan. Its elegant Corinthian-order street entry serves a stair



Figure 30a. Stuart house entry.

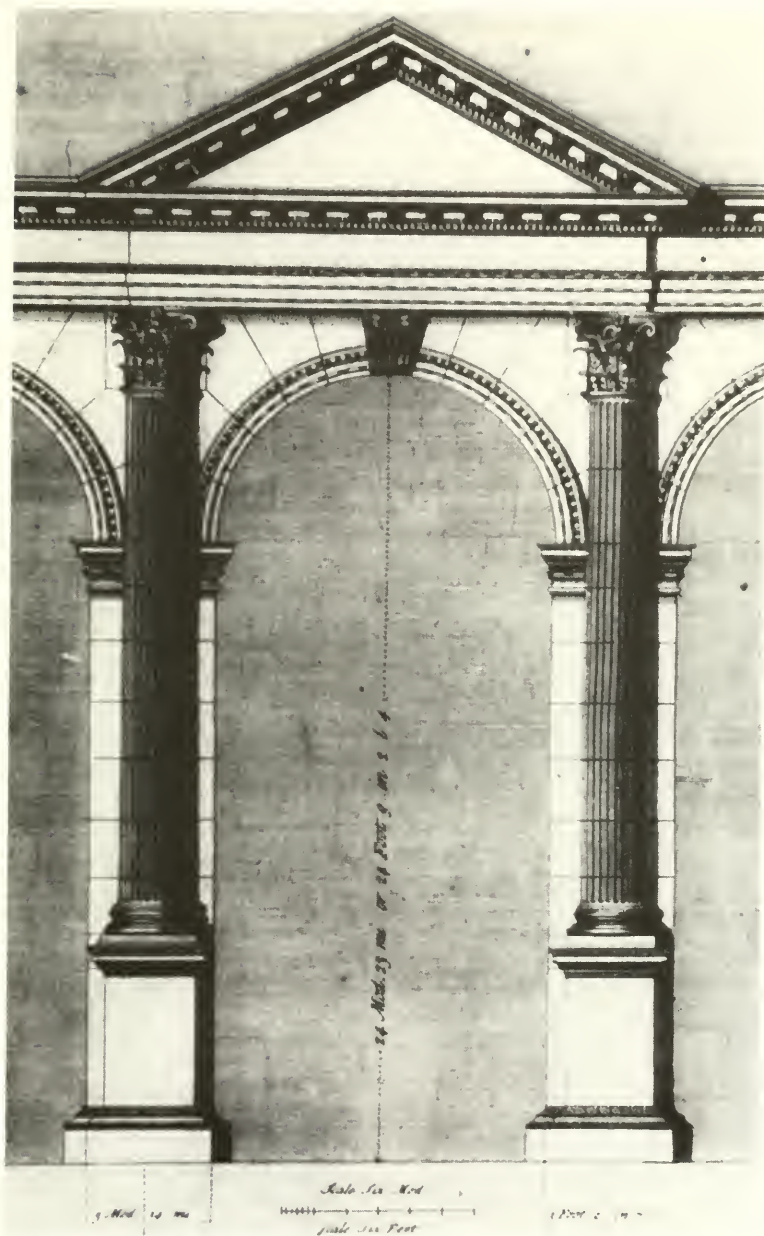


Figure 30b. Plate XIII from Edward Oakley's *Magazine of Architecture, Perspective, and Sculpture* (London: 1730, 1732, 1733).

passage traversing the west side of the house. The flush siding of the street facade emphasizes the formality of both the door surround and the Palladian tabernacles with pitch pediments on the first and second floor windows. The handsomely carved entry (Fig. 30a) could well have been suggested by a standard source such as Edward Oakley's *Magazine of Architecture, Perspective, and Sculpture*, first issued in 1730. Ezra Waite owned a copy of that work, which contained a design for a Corinthian arcade (Fig. 30b) that is remarkably similar to the Stuart doorway. Neither the builder nor the Sommers carver, however, chose to employ the smooth rustication in the spandrels or the arch impostes shown by Oakley. The keystone of the Stuart door almost certainly was fitted with a scrolled and carved console originally.

The woodwork of the second floor parlor of the Stuart house, now on exhibit in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, represents the Sommers carver at his best in regard to modish Rococo design. Even the inclusion of a scrolled "pediment" into the bold crosssetted frame of the overmantel (Fig. 31) reveals a high Rococo architectural approach. This represents a reactionary statement to the heavier, fully classical compositions called for in mainstream Palladian design sources which employed architectural forms based upon Hellenic and Roman masonry. This tenor is continued in the design of the elegant scrolled "side brackets," as Waite might have called them, flanking the overmantel (Fig. 31a), which rests upon a more formal marble mantel. Here, quite in contrast with the more sedate Sommers house work, the carver has introduced a greater sense of restlessness and movement by utilizing competently-cut naturalistic blooms and leafage (Fig. 31c) and disappearing planes surrounding the upper volute (Fig. 31d). The light-hearted execution of this overmantel is certainly closer to late Rococo London work than most of the Sommers carver's designs. The large leafy finial erupting between the rosettes of the overmantel (Fig. 31e) appears to have lost its tip, which more than likely was a bold, scrolling leaf similar to the central element of the upper appliqué of the Sommers chimneypiece (Fig. 18) or the finial of the Bocquet overmantel (Fig. 34d). An especially useful comparison between the overmantel appliqué in the Sommers house and the relief carving of the exceptional pulvinated friezes of the two original Stuart parlor doors (Fig. 32) flanking the chimneypiece shows the tendency of carvers to repeat familiar compositions. The layout of the foliated C-and-S-scroll design of the door heads is basically that used by the carver for

each half of the Sommers appliqué (Fig.18a), although both spacing and detail is varied.



Figure 31. Chimneypiece, second floor southeast parlor of the Stuart house. Courtesy of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, accession 27.78.



Figure 31a. Side bracket, Stuart overmantel. Courtesy of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.



Figure 31b. Detail of overmantel side bracket. Courtesy of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.



Figure 31c. Detail of overmantel side bracket. Courtesy of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.



Figure 31d. Detail of overmantel side bracket. Courtesy of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.



Figure 31e. Detail of "pediment" carving, *Stuart overmantel*. Courtesy of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

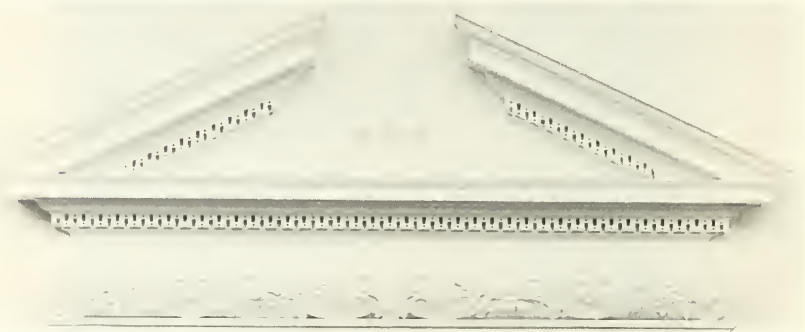


Figure 32. The pulvinated frieze of a west door in the *Stuart parlor*. Courtesy of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

A smaller first floor room, fully paneled like the parlor, is also located in the Minneapolis Institute. The chimneypiece (not illustrated) consists of an overmantel with a broken pitch pediment supported by Ionic pilasters with carved capitals. Between the pilasters is a crossetted frame with two rosettes at the top, carved much in the style of the four flowers used on the parlor overmantel. The mantel of this chimneypiece is ornamented only with Doric denticulation and classical moldings, all in keeping for first floor chimneypieces, which in Charleston were generally much simpler than the principle second floor chimneypieces, as we have seen.

Certainly no less detailed than the Stuart parlor is the parlor of the Peter Bocquet house at 95 Broad (Fig. 33), a brick single house whose exterior was remodeled in the nineteenth century, possibly receiving its present stucco overcasting at that time. Bocquet (1744-1793?) married Elizabeth McLaughling in 1769, and during the following year his father, Peter Bocquet, Sr., gave him the lot on Broad Street. A major in the militia, Bocquet was arrested by the British in 1780 and confined in the Exchange.⁸⁴ The parlor of Bocquet's dwelling is located on the second floor, and contains a chimneypiece (Fig. 34) that is stylistically the most



Figure 33. The Peter Bocquet house, 95 Broad Street, 1770-1774, north or front elevation. MRF S-12120.



Figure 34. The second floor north parlor chimneypiece, Bocquet house.

advanced specimen of the Sommers carver's work. The format of the overmantel is very similar to the Stuart house, although its proportions and attenuated sweep of the "pediment" suffer slightly from the exceptional width of the chimneypiece. The lower portion of the side brackets, in fact, is virtually identical to the



Figure 34a. Overmantel side bracket, Bocquet house.



Figure 34b. Detail of overmantel side bracket.



Figure 34c. Detail of overmantel side bracket.

Stuart carving in regard to the placement of leafage, but this is the result of similar draftsmanship and not the use of identical patterns in both houses. Even the placement of the floral elements, with their attendant leaves, on the upper part of these large S-scrolls is similar to the Stuart overmantel. In this instance, however, the carver chose to use fruit-like motifs in conjunction with the blooms, and even revealed the back side of a flower (Fig.34c), a rare device in American carving. The upper volutes



Figure 34d. Detail of "pediment" carving.

of the side brackets are surrounded by leafage with disappearing planes similar to the Stuart carving. The coving of the crosssetted overmantel frame is carved with a guilloche pattern that appears



Figure 35. Left console of the Bocquet parlor mantel.

to be identical to that on the Sommers house overmantel framing (Fig. 18a), but here the carver ornamented the mitres of the frame with acanthus leaves (Fig. 34b) rather than simply finishing the

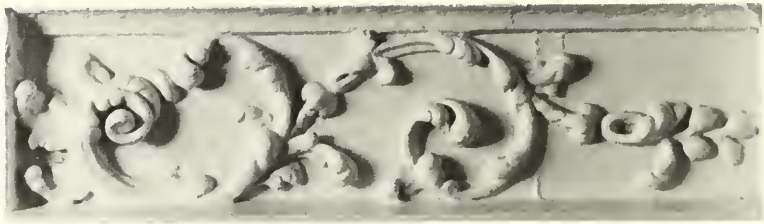


Figure 35a. Bocquet mantel frieze carving, right side.

mitres with a carved “strap” as the Sommers frame was done.

Strong Neoclassical details on the Bocquet chimneypiece reveal the “newest taste” in Charleston, and provide something of a transitional air to the style of the carving. Patera-like bosses ornament the lower volutes of the overmantel side pieces (Fig. 34b) and the sides of the magnificent mantel consoles (Fig.35).



Figure 35b. Mantel tablet carving, Bocquet house.

The round bosses and swags of husks on the central tablet of the mantel (Fig.35b) reflect the same shift in taste toward the “antique” style, but the overall composition of the chimneypiece is thoroughly Rococo. The egg-and-leaf ovolo (Figs.35a, 35b) under the mantel shelf is identical to the same molding used in the Sommers pediment (Fig.18), but the design of this molding should not be considered a “signature” of the Sommers carver since it was illustrated in several popular architectural books. A similar parallel is the carving on the heavy ovolo surrounding the fireplace jambs (Fig.35), which is the same pattern cut on the ovolo used on the hall door of the first floor southeast room of the Brewton house (Figs.22, 22a). The strapwork-and-flower design is the same, but the outlining cuts of the flowers reveal the difference between Waite’s carving and that of the Sommers carver.



Figure 36. Second floor south room chimneypiece, Bocquet house.

The format of the chimneypiece (Fig.36) adjoining the Bocquet parlor on the south end of the house is a simplified version of the parlor work. Here the crossetting was allowed to

return above the mantel shelf, and although the elements of the mantel crown moldings are essentially the same, Doric denticulation is placed below the ovolo, and there are no supporting consoles. The elaborate repeating fretwork pattern on the frieze of this mantel is a surprising detail, quite unlike any other known fretwork in Charleston. An examination of the fret reveals the probability that the design was intended not as a blind fret, but as a pattern for relief carving, but the “flat” application of this design here is nevertheless very successful.



Figure 37. The John Edwards house, 15 Meeting Street, 1770-1774, east or front elevation. MRF S-12124.

All of the work attributed to the Sommers carver is by no means as grand as the carving in the Sommers, Brewton, Stuart, or Bocquet houses. Those buildings, in fact, represent the most elaborate of this carver's surviving interior ornament. A slightly more modest statement is made in an impressive frame five-bay double house at 15 Meeting Street, the John Edwards house. Edwards (d.1781) was an exceptionally wealthy merchant who



Figure 37a. Exterior console, north side of Edwards house pediment.

had emigrated from Britain about 1750. By the time of the Revolution, he had personally loaned the new state of South Carolina over £226,000, and his residence, which was sumptuously furnished, was staffed by a dozen servants. One piece of furniture standing in the house at the time of Edwards' death, and very likely made for the house about the time construction was under-way, was "A large Mahogany Book Case £100:00:00." This was none other than the magnificent library bookcase now in the Heyward-Washington House, a property of the Charleston Museum. This piece descended into the Holmes family through the marriage of Edwards' daughter Elizabeth to John Bee Holmes.⁸⁵

The street facade of the Edwards house is finished with flush siding with smooth rustication, the bevelled edges of the siding and the sham joints imitating ashlar construction in stone. The other elevations of the building are conventionally sided with molded weatherboarding. Supporting the impressive pediment

of the house is a massive pair of consoles (Fig. 37a) attributed to the Sommers carver, just as the interior decoration is. The most elaborate room, quite typically, is the second floor parlor located at the southeast corner of the house. The chimneypiece (Fig.38)



Figure 38. Second floor southeast parlor chimneypiece, Edwards house.



Figure 38a. Mantel pilaster appliqué, Edwards parlor.

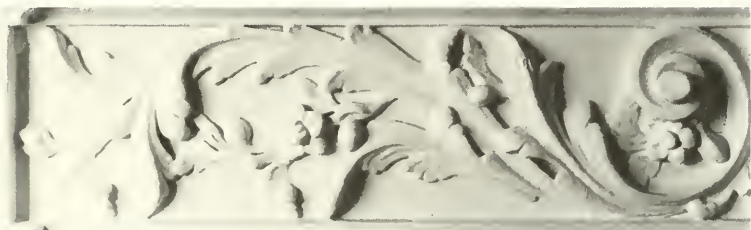


Figure 38b. Mantel frieze carving, Edwards parlor.



Figure 38c. Detail of mantel frieze carving.



Figure 38d. Mantel tablet carving, Edwards parlor.

of this room faces the street. The bulk of the carving on this chimneypiece ornaments the frieze of the mantel. The heads of the pilasters have appliquéés reminiscent of the overmantel plinth carving in the Brewton parlor (Fig.29b). A truly close parallel between this mantel and carving in the Brewton house occurs in the Gothic strapwork of the central tablet (Fig.38d), which is almost identical to the composition of the same detail used by Waite in the frieze of the door head in the first floor southeast room of the Brewton house (Figs.22, 22a). Even the central leafage inside the strapwork is similar to the Brewton carving, but the basic differences between the gouged modeling used by the Sommers carver and by Waite can be observed with close scrutiny. This Gothic panel in the Edwards house actually has a higher degree of finish than that in the Brewton, for here the carver chose to hollow the scrolls at each end of the tablet, as well as the horizontal members of the appliqué. This is consistent with the strapwork appliquéés on the Sommers mantel frieze (Fig.13). In contrast, all of Waite's "Gothic" strapwork and fret in and outside the Brewton house is unmodelled except for the appropriate overlaps.

The first floor room of the Edwards house directly below the parlor draws its strength from the strong Palladian statement made by a full entablature with modillions and the classical chimneypiece (Fig.39). Stylistically, this chimneypiece is less advanced than that of the upper room. This room is devoid of carving except for the robust mantel consoles (Fig.39a) with boldly curling acanthus, a detail which the Sommers carver was particularly adept in executing.



Figure 39. First floor southeast room chimneypiece, Edwards house.



Figure 39a. Left mantel console, first floor room, Edwards house.

A frame house at 22 Legare Street (Fig. 40) is one of two houses on that street owned by Charles Elliott (1737-1781), a wealthy planter who owned over 6,000 acres of land in Colleton County. At the time of his death, Elliott owned only one of his Charleston houses, possibly the dwelling still standing at 43 Legare. His will of 1781 left his wife his “. . . House out houses and lot of land in Charles Town friend Street”; Friend Street later became Legare. 22 Legare was noted as lot number 240 on the 1725 “Grand Modell” of Charleston. Elliott acquired the unusually large lot, which was (and remains) 110 feet by 288, in April, 1764. Elliott paid James Skirving £2,500 South Carolina currency for the property, the relatively large sum indicating the possibility that a structure already was present on the lot. It is possible that Elliott either remodeled an earlier house, or built anew shortly after his 1766 marriage to Ann Ferguson, his second wife. Interestingly,

during the following year Elliott, along with five other men, formed a partnership to build sawmills on the Edisto river; one of his partners was the building contractor Daniel Cannon.⁸⁶

The frame house is an unusual plan for Charleston during this period. The building is two rooms deep, yet with the principle entry on the long axis, which is perpendicular to the street. It is possible that the dwelling originally was a single house which was extended on the north side. This would explain the architectural anomaly of a second floor parlor chimneypiece (Fig. 41) which is jammed against a partition wall. Elements of this chimneypiece, particularly the profile and placement of the moldings which comprise the mantel shelf, show considerable consistency with a number of the other eleven houses examined in this study. Mantels and overmantels in the series associated with the Sommers carver do vary in the employment of various architectural features. However, a detailed examination of actual molding sections with a molding comb, along with a compilation of critical dimensions



Figure 40. The Charles Elliott house, 22 Legare Street, 1767-1770, west side elevation. MRF S-12123.



Figure 41. Second floor southwest parlor chimneypiece, Elliott house.

and a proportional study of entire chimneypieces, has not been carried out. When this is done, such a study may well reveal that much of the woodwork which this carver ornamented was drawn and joined by the same carpenter or contractor. The various combinations of molded elements which comprise such things

as mantel shelves, of course, were dictated by orthodox classical design, and may be found in a large number of published translations of Greek entablatures. A study of the architecture which provided a sound base for the Sommers carver's work, however, is beyond the scope of this article.



Figure 41a. Center of mantel frieze carving, Elliott house.

The fine carving of the Elliott parlor chimneypiece suggests in more than one detail reliance upon some published design source, but none have been found. One of these is the frolicsome eagle peering out from behind a collar of leafage (Fig. 41a), a particularly charming detail that even seems related to the design of heraldic crests. Another is the appliqués placed within the crosstted architrave of the mantel (Fig. 41c). The tendril of leaves and blooms spurting forth from the center of the carved flower is a detail which occurs with some regularity in late seventeenth century Paris design sources, a motif aped by a series of English books of architecture in the eighteenth century. Even the tightly-clustered flowers which adorn the mantel shelf plinths (Fig. 41d) seem closer to published designs than most of the "coffer" flowers used by the Sommers carver. The stair brackets of the Elliott house (Fig. 42) have the basic profile of a console which has been given a horizontal orientation, following a common Rococo schematic.



Figure 41b. Mantel frieze carving.



Figure 41c. Mantel architrave carving.



Figure 41d. Mantel plinth carving.



Figure 42. Stair bracket, first floor passage, Elliott house.



Figure 43. The Daniel Heyward (Heyward-Washington) house, 87 Church Street, 1770-1771, east or front elevation. Courtesy of the Charleston Museum. MRF S-12119.

Daniel Heyward's three-story brick double house at 87 Church Street (Fig. 43), in addition to its architectural amenities, was rendered nationally famous by President Washington's use of the dwelling during his visit of 1791. The Charleston Museum acquired the property in 1929. A certain amount of confusion regarding the construction date of this house has long existed due to the description in land records and advertisements of improvements on the lot. Standing on a portion of lot 53 in the "Grand Modell," the Heyward house is thought to have been built about 1770. However, in 1750, after the death of an earlier owner of the property, gunsmith John Milner, Sr., the southern portion of lot 53 was sold, along with a "Brick house of Three Stories," for the sum of £4110 South Carolina currency. Daniel Heyward purchased the property "at public Vendue" in July, 1770; the notice of this sale described a "good Brick House, two Stories high, with other convenient Buildings: Late the Property of John Milner" Daniel Heyward (1720-1777) was a successful rice and indigo planter who acquired over 17,000 acres of land by the time of his death. At the time of his marriage to Elizabeth Simons in September, 1771, his third marriage, Heyward was esteemed by a Charleston newspaper as "the greatest planter in this province." It may be that Heyward demolished the Milner house at about this time, constructing the present house for his new wife. The surviving dependencies, however, may well be the "other convenient Buildings" which comprised the dependencies for Milner's house. Heyward's son, Thomas Heyward, owned the house at the time it was leased for Washington's visit.⁸⁷

The second floor parlor of the Heyward house contains a chimneypiece (Fig. 44) ornamented by the Sommers carver. The extensive use of sawn fret on the overmantel and mantel frieze is not unusual for Charleston during this period. The figure-eight fret pattern employed has long been known as the "Elfe fret" due to the use of the same pattern of fretwork on various pieces of furniture popularly thought to be the work of Thomas Elfe. Ironically, however, no piece of case furniture has yet to be firmly attributed to Elfe's shop, yet the term "Elfe fret" may still be appropriate due to its even more extensive use in the John Fullerton house (Fig. 50) at 15 Legare street. This house, and the probable origin of its fret, is discussed below.

Two patterns of figure-eight fret are employed on the Heyward chimneypiece. The overmantel makes effective use of one variation inside the usual crosstetted frame. This fret is of mahogany,



Figure 44. Second floor southeast parlor chimneypiece, Heyward house. Courtesy of the Charleston Museum. MRF S-12119.



Figure 44a. Detail of overmantel fret, Heyward house. Courtesy of the Charleston Museum. MRF S-12119.

and paint has been removed from it during the course of restoration. Scribe lines used for laying out the pattern are clearly evident (Fig. 44a). There is some question whether any such thin fret was indeed left unpainted originally. The author suspects that most such delicate fretwork was cut from mahogany, which could withstand sawing better than pine or cypress. The use of a more expensive material merely for its working properties, then, would not preclude an intent to paint it. Proof of this must await paint analysis and wood identification on other Charleston frets of similar thickness.

The mantel fret, which is much thicker, and probably made from a softwood, is actually the pattern frequently used on the frieze of Charleston furniture. A double chest (Fig. 44b) in the MESDA collection illustrates this familiar design. This chest, which is fitted with a secretary drawer, recalls the earlier mention of a “double chest of drawers with a fret round” for which Elfe charged Humprey Sommers £80 in 1773.



Figure 44b. Detail of a cornice frieze on a Charleston double chest. MESDA accession 946.

The carving of the mantel tablet (Fig.44c), which has suffered surface attrition and is missing several elements including a large central leaf, follows a basic composition familiar in the work of the Sommers carver. For example, the leaved C-and-S scroll at each side of this appliqué has the same basic arrangement of elements evident in the Sommers house mantel tablet carving (Fig. 11) as well as the larger appliqué on the Sommers overmantel (Fig. 18). Such standardization of composition is certainly an excellent illustration of how a carver developed a personal style of draftsmanship. Similarly, the Heyward mantel consoles (Fig.44d) have acanthus leaves that also indicate stylistic standardization, as we may note in the leaf profiles and modeling of the Sommers house consoles (Fig.16).



Figure 44c. Mantel tablet carving, Heyward house. Courtesy of the Charleston Museum. MRF S-12119.



Figure 44d. Left mantel console, Heyward parlor. Courtesy of the Charleston Museum. MRF S-12119.

“Tenement” is a term which carries negative connotations in the twentieth century, but had no such derogatory association two centuries ago. Charleston, in fact, was (and is) graced by a number of such structures. A nicely detailed three-story six-bay double tenement (Fig.45) on Court House Square is believed to have been built by Daniel Blake (1731-1780). An advertisement in the *South Carolina Gazette* for 10 January 1771 announced the sale of the effects of “DOUGAL CAMPBELL, Esq.,” a deceased gentleman who had been a resident in “Mr. BLAKE’S South Tenement next to the STATE-HOUSE,” presumably the same building as the one illustrated here. The present courthouse of 1792 was built on the ruins of the earlier State House. Blake was a planter who had acquired nearly 12,000 acres by the time of his death; over 750 slaves tended his various plantations.⁸⁸

The street elevation of the Blake tenements has a double string course delineating the third floor, a feature not unusual to three-



Figure 45. The Daniel Blake tenements, Court House Square, 1768-1770, south or front elevation. Courtesy of Charleston County. MRF S-12125.

story masonry dwellings in Charleston, but the window arches are rather curious in that they are elliptical in both the soffit and brick coursing, while the heads of the arches are flat. The interiors



Figure 45a. Console, west entry, Blake tenements. Courtesy of Charleston County. MRF S-12125.

of the west side of the building were remodeled during the Neoclassical period, but the east side interiors were not disturbed. Perhaps the most modest of the Sommers carver's work, a second floor room has only consoles (Fig.46a) as carved ornament for its simple chimneypiece (Fig.46). These details nicely mirror four



Figure 46. Second floor southeast parlor chimneypiece, Blake tenements. Courtesy of Charleston County. MRF S-12125.

similar consoles (Fig.45a) by the same carver which support the pitch pediments of the twin entries.



Figure 46a. Right mantel console, Blake tenements. Courtesy of Charleston County. MRF S-12125.

Another piece of work attributed to the Sommers carver is the mantel of the large ballroom at Hampton Plantation (Fig.48). Hampton (Fig.47), which is located near the Santee River a considerable distance from Charleston, is a large dwelling originally constructed about 1735 as a much smaller central-hall house with four rooms on the first floor and two rooms on the second floor. Daniel Huger Horry (d.1785) acquired the plantation in 1757 as part of the dowry of Judith Serré, and subsequently raised a shed wing on the north side of the house to a full two stories, thereby changing the entire roof line of the structure. Very likely at the time of his 1768 marriage to his second wife, Harriott Pinckney, the daughter of Chief Justice Charles Pinckney,⁸⁹ Horry added the east and west wings to the building. The heroic portico



Figure 47. Hampton Plantation, Wambaw Creek, St. James' Parish, Berkeley County, 1768-1770, south or front elevation. Courtesy of the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. Photograph courtesy of The Beehive Press, Savannah, Georgia; as illustrated in Mills Lane, Architecture of the Old South: South Carolina.

of the house, judging from its Neoclassical detail and a modillioned cornice which is not shared by the main block of the house, probably was built after Horry's death. The east wing ballroom extends an impressive two full stories in height to a coved ceiling. The commodious fireplace of this room retains tin-enamelled tiles of probable Liverpool manufacture. Virtually all of these have transfer-printed scenes; two of the tiles appear to be hand-painted, and may be from Bristol. There is a possibility that all of these jamb tiles at one time in the past have been taken down and then returned to place. Tiled jamb decoration was common in Low Country fireplaces, though in most instances such tiles have either been covered by subsequent reductions of fireplace openings or lost by damage. Tin-enamelled tiles for such use were imported to Charleston from Holland and Bristol, in addition to Liverpool. By 1756, John Sadler, an engraver and printer in Liverpool, had perfected the process of transfer printing on tin-enamelled tiles and subsequently on various other types of earthenwares. In 1765, the Charleston merchant John Edwards, who later built the fine double house on Meeting Street already

discussed, imported “ . . . from Liverpool: . . . A quantity of neat copper-plate chimney tiles, both black and red . . . Crates of yellow ware . . . ” along with “a few 12.4 [sic] Wilton carpets.”⁹⁰



Figure 48. Mantel, (east) ballroom, Hampton. Courtesy of the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. Photograph by Louis Schwartz, Charleston.

The mantel frieze carving (Fig. 48a) in the Hampton ballroom issues forth sinuously from the handles of a decidedly Neoclassical urn in the center. Portions of the composition of the elongated flow of the frieze carving are very close to similar appliquéés in the Bocquet parlor (Fig. 35a). Numerous pieces of the Hampton carving are missing; at the time the photographs illustrated here were taken in 1956, the carving had no more than its original coat of paint, but the work subsequently has been overpainted. The consoles are the most elaborate examples known by the Sommers carver. The use of an upturned bloom below the lower acanthus, trailing from its center a vine of flowers and leaves, has no parallel in other work by this carver. This trail of flowers and leaves, by overlapping the ogee pilaster surrounds, provides

a considerable feeling of depth and spontaneity. All of this carving, and indeed the mantel itself, was no doubt executed in Charleston and sent up the coast to the Santee and thence to Wambaw Creek, adjacent to Hampton.



Figure 48a. Right side of mantel, Hampton ballroom. Courtesy of the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. Photograph by Louis Schwartz, Charleston.

One of the most exceptional pieces of work attributed to the Sommers carver is a large memorial (Figs. 1, 49) 73 1/2 inches in height and 51 1/4 inches wide. This memorial hangs in First Scots Presbyterian Church at 53 Meeting, a masonry structure with twin

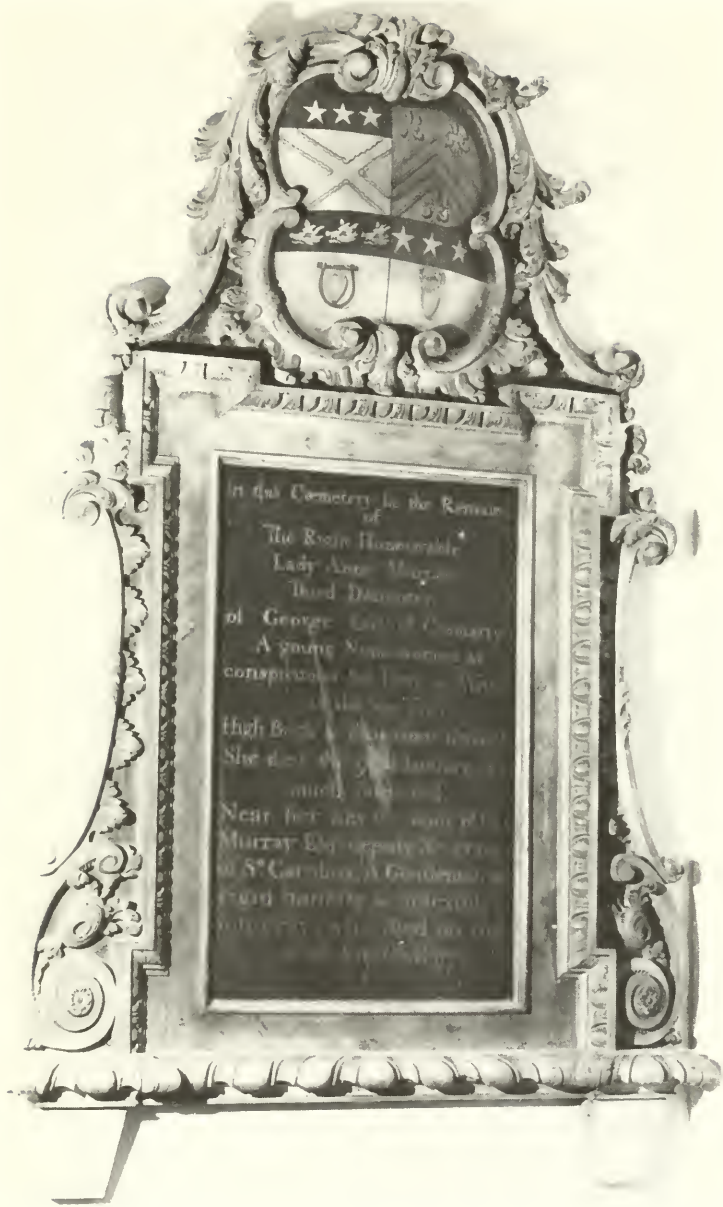


Figure 49. The memorial to Lady Anne Murray, First Scots Presbyterian Church, 57 Meeting Street, 1768-1772. Courtesy of First Scots Presbyterian Church. MRF S-8722.

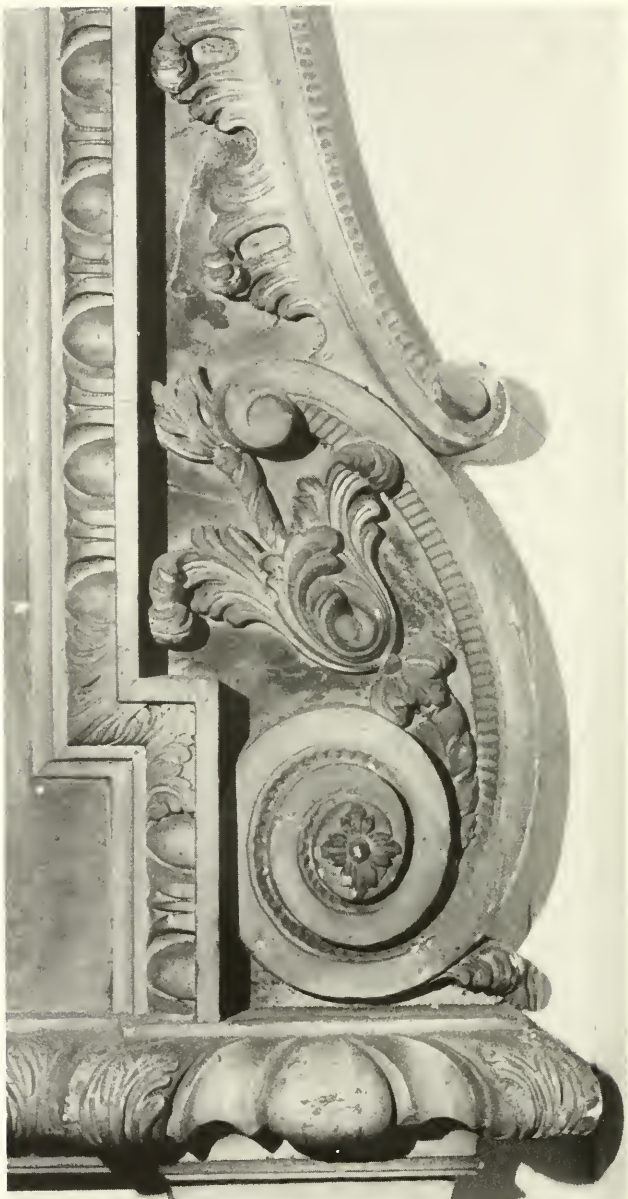


Figure 49a. Detail of side bracket, Murray memorial. Courtesy of First Scots Presbyterian Church. MRF S-8722.

towers that was completed in 1814. An earlier frame church, which may have been constructed as early as the mid-1730's and was enlarged in 1763, stood in the southeast corner of the present graveyard on the church property. The memorial presumably was first located in that earlier structure, which is now gone. The painted inscription in Roman letters on this tablet indicates that it was erected as a memorial to "The Right Honorable Lady Anne Murray, Third Daughter of George Earl of Cromarty." This "young Noblewoman," as the inscription records, was deemed "as conspicuous for Piety & Virtue as she was for High Birth & illustrious descent." Certainly painted by the same hand, but at a later date and in larger letters, a second inscription below that of Anne Murray records that "Geo Murray Esqr. deputy Secretary of So. Carolina" was buried near the lady. Anne Murray died on 17 January 1768. She was the wife of John Murray (d.1774), a Scots physician who had arrived in the Low Country during the 1740's. He married Lady Anne Mackenzie in February, 1764.⁹¹ George Murray was evidently a brother or other close relation of John Murray's; he died, as the memorial indicates, on 24 September 1772. Since a space was obviously left on the tablet below the inscription for Lady Anne Murray, John Murray may have intended that a memorial to himself be added to the tablet later, but instead inserted the memorial to George Murray. The sessions books for First Scots Presbyterian are missing, having been taken to Columbia and then destroyed during the Civil War. Like Anglican vestry books, those records might have provided information regarding the installation of the memorial. The estate papers of John Murray are also missing, so any debit against his estate by a carver is lost to us.

Retaining its original colors of "stone" gray, black, gold, along with a polychrome rendering of the Murray and Mackenzie arms in the cartouche and ochre marbleizing inside the crossetted frame, this memorial provides the finest existing study of the Sommers carver's techniques, since all of the cuts may be clearly seen. The composition of the leafage follows this artisan's usual style, as a comparison with the buildings previously discussed clearly shows. The ruffled edging of the scrolls of the cartouche and the main scrolls at the sides of the frame, while standard Rococo devices, do not appear in architectural interiors by this carver. There is extensive use of gougework used as shading for the principle scrolls (Fig.49a). Surprisingly, there is less undercutting of some of the leafage, particularly that surrounding the cartouche (Fig.49b),



Figure 49b. Detail of side bracket. Courtesy of First Scots Presbyterian Church. MRF S-8722.

than this carver normally used in architectural work. The lack of undercutting here lends a heavier appearance to the carving, but that does not detract from the imposing appearance of this magnificent memorial, surely one of the finest in America.

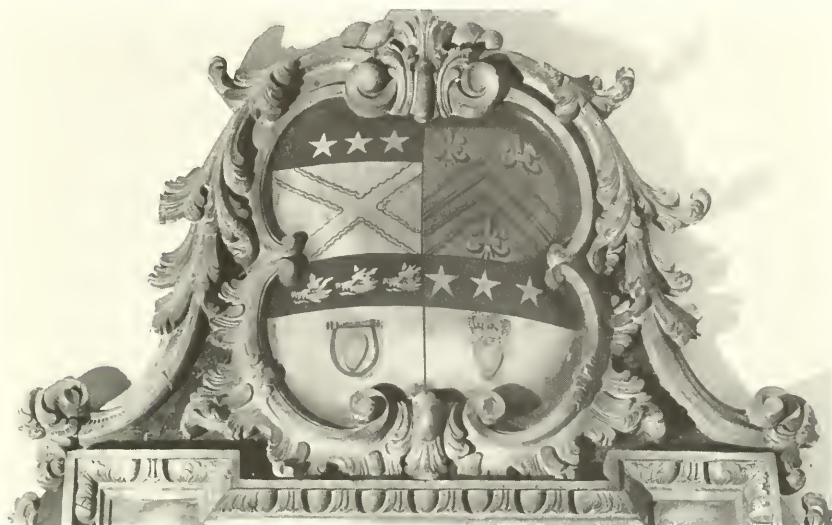


Figure 49c. Cartouche, Murray memorial. Courtesy of First Scots Presbyterian Church. MRF S-8722.

Three Charleston houses, the John Fullerton house at 15 Legare Street, the Jacob Motte, Jr. house at 61 Tradd, and the Robert Pringle house at 70 Tradd, all show the hand of an artisan associated with the Sommers carver. The composition of the carving in these buildings is very much related to the Sommers carver's work, while the actual execution of the carving differs in a significant fashion, indicating the probability that these buildings were carved by a journeyman who was either employed by the Sommers carver or who had opened his own shop.

The Fullerton house (Fig. 50) is a frame single house that is particularly important in several respects. It may have been built as a speculation house by Fullerton (1734?-1779), who was a carpenter and contractor. Fullerton purchased a lot eighty feet wide from the merchant William Gibbes in 1772. In at least two subsequent transactions, Fullerton and his wife Elizabeth sold portions of the lot. One sale was to John Bennett, also a carpenter, and took place in November, 1776. Bennett paid £3,500 South Carolina money. A second sale of another portion of the Legare

Street lot was made to the merchant George Cooke in May, 1777; £7,500 was the purchase price in this instance, indicating that it may have been Cooke who acquired the house which Fullerton probably built during 1772-1773. The house has tabernacle frames on the street elevation, which as we have seen are a familiar feature of pre-Revolutionary Charleston frame houses. Of more importance here, however, is the extensive use of sawn fretwork on the chimneypiece of the second floor parlor (Fig. 51). The pattern of this fret, both on the mantel and overmantel, is the same as the



Figure 50. The John Fullerton house, 15 Legare Street, c. 1772, east side elevation. MRF S-11625.



Figure 51. Second floor east parlor chimneypiece, Fullerton house.

fret of the Heyward overmantel (Fig.44). Fullerton obviously depended upon the shop of Thomas Elfe for at least some of this work. In January, 1768, Elfe's records noted, among accounts due, £800 owing the shop by the contracting partnership of William Miller and John Fullerton. During December, 1772, Elfe charged Fullerton £1.10 for "a frett," and in January, 1773, he charged Fullerton on three occasions for a total of 100 feet and "2 ps" frett, charged variously at four shillings and six shillings three pence per foot. The two pieces listed separately were charged at

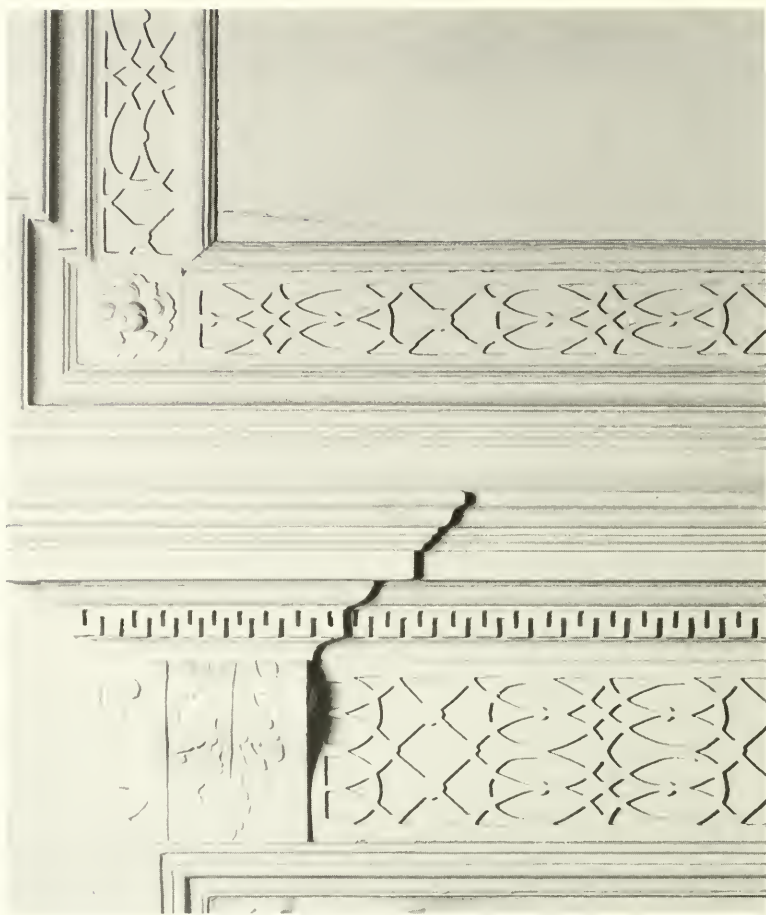


Figure 51a. Detail of fret, Fullerton parlor mantel and overmantel.

thirty shillings per piece. Fullerton was still doing business with Elfe in December, 1774, when he was charged £51.8 for "Mahogany sold him,"⁹² material perhaps intended for stair elements or doors. It is very likely that the extensive fret which Fullerton used in his Legare Street house was part of that which Elfe had charged him for in January, 1773, although there is no actual proof.

Fullerton continued an active contracting business until the latter part of the 1770's. He was paid for extensive work in the Independent Congregational Church in 1774 and 1776, including framing and flooring, interior and exterior cornices, and other

finish work. The vestry books of St. Michael's record that the firm of Miller and Fullerton had contracted for the St. Michael's parsonage at 39 Meeting, which was built in 1766/1767. Other buildings said to have been constructed by Fullerton were described in an 1822 account by his grandson, William Simmons, and included the John Ashe house at 32 South Battery, the Edward Rutledge house at 117 Broad, and the David Ramsay house at 92 Broad. A study of these dwellings, along with 15 Legare, should provide ample identification of other existing work by Fullerton. This prolific contractor also took an active role in politics; he was elected to the Second and Third General Assemblies of the new state during 1776-1779. He died 20 February 1779, "Aged 45 years & 5 months." Elizabeth Fullerton advertised the sale of Fullerton's 650-acre "Plantation on the Four Holes [Swamp]," a 750-acre tract in Craven County, along with "Twenty-one valuable slaves, among which are good Carpenters" and all of the tools.⁹³



Figure 51b. Right console, Fullerton parlor mantel.

The chimneypiece in 15 Legare is fitted with a pair of consoles and two miniature trusses (Fig. 51b) that clearly indicate a strong design influence from the Sommers carver. The composition of the acanthus leaves, for example, are very similar to those on the consoles of the Heyward house (Fig. 44d) and the Hampton ballroom (Fig. 48a). Here, however, the modeling cuts are not as bold as those of the Sommers carver, and in fact the Fullerton consoles show a somewhat more extensive but delicate use of veining. The twisted leaf ends, for example, are shaded, a detail which the Sommers carver usually omitted. An exception to this is the Murray memorial (center of Fig. 49b). The central vein of the Fullerton console leaves are veined full-length like those of the Hampton consoles.

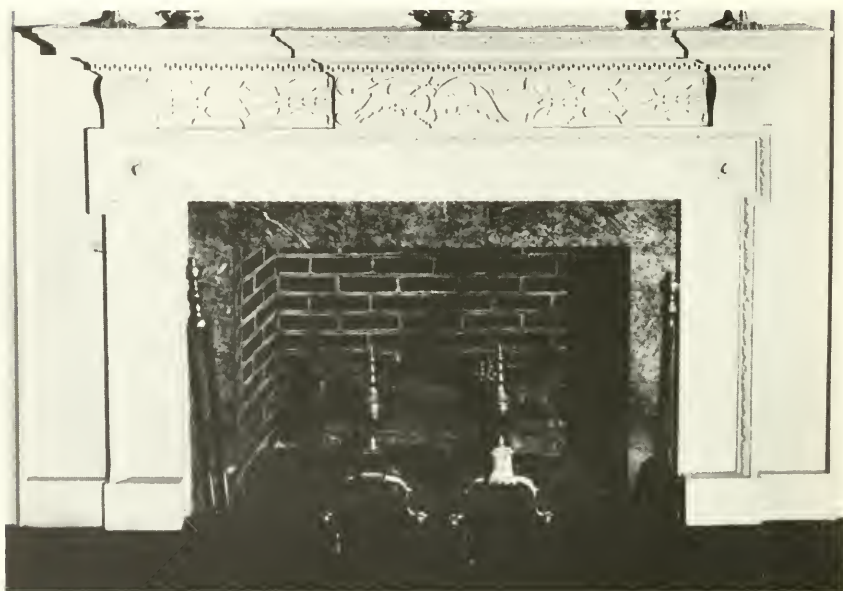


Figure 52. The Jacob Motte, Jr., house, 61 Tradd Street, 1765-1775, second floor north parlor chimneypiece. Courtesy of the St. Louis Art Museum, accession 28:1929.

The second floor parlor of the Jacob Motte, Jr. house at 61 Tradd was removed by the Saint Louis Art Museum in Saint Louis, Missouri, in 1929, where it is now on exhibit. The Motte house (not illustrated) is a stuccoed brick three-story single house. Motte (1729-1780) was the son of Jacob Motte, Sr. (1700-1770), the Public Treasurer of the colony. The younger Motte was even more



Figure 52a. Left console, Motte parlor mantel. Courtesy of the St. Louis Art Museum.

successful than his father, partially by virtue of his 1758 marriage to Rebecca Brewton, the daughter of Robert Brewton; Motte owned 244 slaves at the time of his death.⁹⁴ The parlor mantel (Fig. 52) is finished with consoles (Fig. 52a) that have acanthus leafage showing the same carving style as the Fullerton consoles (Fig. 51b), although the unusual center section of the Motte consoles is a further divergence from the normal Sommers carver examples. The pendant lower portion of the center leaves is



Figure 52b. Mantel tablet carving, Motte parlor. Courtesy of the St. Louis Art Museum.

reminiscent of some of the designs used by the Sommers carver for overmantel finials like that in the Bocquet house, though it is asymmetrical and set off by a U-shaped ribbon and a diminutive band of cabling. The side leaves are given even more detail than the Fullerton examples, especially in regard to the twisted ends, showing the strong development of personal style in the work of this artisan. The same is true of the mantel frieze carving



Figure 53. The Robert Pringle house, 70 Tradd Street, 1774, first floor south room chimneypiece. MRF S-13868.

(Figs. 52, 52b), which shares stylistic details with the work of the Sommers carver, but in this instance is far simpler in detail and shows a less sophisticated understanding of flow and spatial use. The open nature of the tablet carving (Fig. 52b), in combination with the use of arched garlands of elongated husks, lends somewhat of an early Neoclassical air to the chimneypiece.

The Robert Pringle house (not illustrated) at 70 Tradd is a three story brick single house constructed late in the life of Pringle (1702-1776), a wealthy merchant and assistant judge of the Court of Common Pleas and General Sessions from 1761 until 1771, when his commission was revoked for patriotic leanings.⁹⁵ The second floor parlor of the house has lost its original carved appliqué; those present in the room date from the Victorian



Figure 53a. Mantel frieze, first floor, Pringle house.



Figure 53b. Left mantel console, first floor, Pringle house.

period. The first floor room on the street side of the house, however, retains all of its mantel carving with a fully-ornamented frieze (Fig. 53a). Though obscured with paint, the console carving employs leafage at the sides which is very similar to the Motte consoles, though again the center composition of the consoles varies. Here, what normally would be fillets at the sides of the consoles are instead rendered as cable moldings. The frieze appliqués (Figs. 53c, 53d) again reveal leafage that shows the influence of the Sommers carver, perhaps more so than the same ornament on the Motte mantel. Here again the design work of this carver, while reasonably competent, is below the standard of the highly detailed draftsmanship of the Sommers carver. This carver's forte was relief carving rather than the design and carving of large appliqués. It is his fine consoles that provide us with the best evidence that this artisan was very likely associated with the Sommers carver.

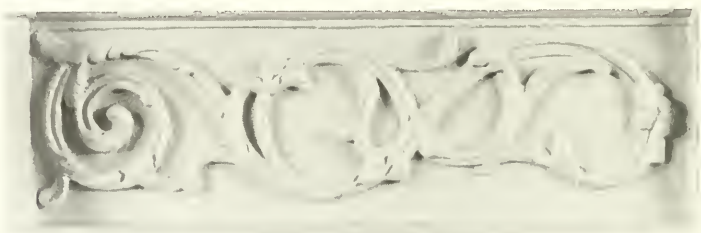


Figure 53c. Mantel frieze carving, Pringle house.



Figure 53d. Mantel tablet carving, Pringle house.

The twelve dwellings which we have examined, along with the Murray memorial, represent the major southern school of Rococo interior architecture south of the Northern Neck of Virginia. These buildings, nine containing work attributed to the Sommers carver and three with carving thought to be by one of his journeymen or apprentices, are by no means the only Rococo interiors surviving in Charleston, even though they are the most important ones. For example, the elaborate second floor parlor of the William Burroughs house, which once stood on Broad Street near St. Michael's, is now installed in Winterthur. The style of the carver who executed this room is in marked contrast with the work of the Sommers carver, yet there are at least two Charleston side chairs and possibly other furniture which can be attributed to the Burroughs carver. Establishing a relationship between architectural and furniture carving is rare anywhere in the South, but particularly so in Charleston—quite an irony in view of John Lord's frequent advertising of furniture carving. The Branford-Horry house at 59 Meeting contains a major second floor parlor that predates the late colonial work examined here, and an examination of the carving in that house could indicate a connection with St. Michael's and the Thomas Bee house, and therefore the carver Henry Burnett. Further work attributable to the Sommers carver, for that matter, may surface. Carving in the Daniel Huger house at 34 Meeting shows stylistic details that could be the work of either the Sommers artisan or Ezra Waite, but the work is too obscured with paint to make a determination. Massive consoles supporting the exterior cornice of the William Gibbes house at 64 South Battery bear comparison with the work of the Sommers carver. Other lesser pre-Revolutionary Charleston structures await examination in regard to possible carved details previously unrecorded.

Who was the mysterious Sommers carver? In view of their extensive trade experience in fashion-conscious London, and their arrival in Charleston in the midst of a major building boom at the end of the colonial period, Thomas Woodin and John Lord are by far the most likely candidates for this presently anonymous carver. Woodin was an educated tradesman with what must have been decent custom in London. He trained one of that city's foremost carvers and cabinetmakers, Samuel Norman. He ascended to comfortable circumstances, if not to the gentry class, yet at the time of his death still retained his tools. He advertised

scarcely at all, but perhaps he had no need of doing so.

John Lord, on the other hand, constantly reminded the public of the many sorts of carving his shop could offer, and placed particular emphasis upon architectural carving. He maintained a well-staffed shop, necessary to a carver bent upon carrying out a large quantity of elaborate and expensive work, and two of his former shop workers followed him in the trade. Like Woodin, there is evidence that Lord attained the status of "gentleman" in Low Country society, the sure mark of a tradesman who had transcended the rigors of the bench to the amenities of a more leisurely life. Such aspirations were not unrealistic in Charleston. Of the twelve dwellings examined here, all were owned by men who served in either the Royal Assembly, the fledgling state General Assembly, or both, and most of them were heavily involved with numerous other political pursuits. Most of them possessed extensive personal wealth. At least five—Sommers, Stuart, Bocquet, Elliott, and Heyward—were customers of Thomas Elfe, ordering in some instances furniture that was exceedingly expensive. Most of the men who built the dwellings we have studied here were deceased by the 1780's. Their patronage had certainly enabled other prominent and skilled Charleston artisans to enjoy vertical mobility, so the trade histories of Woodin and Lord are not in the least unusual.

With the destruction of the State House, the Federal bombardment which obliterated the St. Michael's altar, and the loss of numerous personal estate and church records, we seem to have no concrete evidence remaining that would allow us to make an attribution of this large body of carving to either Woodin or Lord. In view of his extensive advertisements and the fact that he is known to have developed a work force, it is tempting to place the nine principle buildings and the Murray memorial upon the bench of John Lord. For such an attribution to gain soundness, though, we must await documentation which to this point in time has remained frustratingly elusive. But even if the Sommers carver forever remains nameless, there is no question that the work which he left behind him in the Carolina Low Country represents a major statement of American Rococo design and execution.



Figure 54. Reproduction of the Humphrey Sommers parlor chimneypiece, 1986, installed in the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.

FOOTNOTES

1. H. Roy Merrens, *The Colonial South Carolina Scene* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1977), p.253ff
2. J.F.D. Smyth, *A Tour in the United States of America* (London: G. Robinson, et. al., 1784; reprint 1968 by Arno Press, Inc., 2 vols.), Vol. II, p.83.
3. Mark A. De Wolfe Howe, ed., "Journal of Josiah Quincy, Junior, 1773," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Vol.XLIX, pp.441-445.
4. Rosemary Estes, "Daniel Cannon: A Revolutionary 'Mechanick' in Charleston," *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, May, 1983, pp.1-31.
5. Beatrice St. Julien Ravenel, *Architects of Charleston* (Charleston: The Carolina Art Association, 1945), p.29.
6. *State Gazette of South-Carolina*, Charleston, 25 December 1788.
7. Charleston County, South Carolina *Inventories*, Vol. A-D, 1783-1810, pp. 1-6 (The inventories are dated 22 January 1789, 5 March 1789, and 13 June 1789. NOTE: all public records hereafter cited should be understood to be those of Charleston County, held in manuscript, transcript, or microfilm by the South Carolina State Archives, Columbia, unless otherwise stated.); Walter B. Edgar and N. Louise Bailey, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives*, 4 Vols. (Columbia: the University of South Carolina Press, 1974-1984), Vol.II, pp.649, 650. Hereafter cited as *BD*.
8. W. Robert Higgins, "The South Carolina Revolutionary Debt and its Holders, 1776-1780," the *South Carolina Historical Magazine* (Charleston: published quarterly by the South Carolina Historical Society, Vols. 54-87, 1953-1986; before volume 54, this publication was entitled *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*), Vol.72, p.25. Hereafter cited as *SCHM*.
9. *Renunciation of Dower*, 1740-53, No. 436, 25 May 1748.
10. *Wills, etc.*, Vol.78B, 1749-1751 (transcript, hereafter designated as "tr."), pp.603-609; George C. Rogers, Jr., *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys* (Columbia: the University of South Carolina Press, 1980), p.6.
11. *Land Records Misc.*, Pt.54, Book N4, 1774-1775 (tr.), pp.424-430, 23 December 1749.
12. *Land Records Misc.*, Pt.57, Book R4, 1775-1778 (tr.), pp. 63-67, 13 Nov. 1750 (the Church Street property, known as "Humphrey Sommers Marsh"); *Land Records Misc.*, Pt. 26, Book OO, 1753-54 (tr.), pp.156-166, 20 December 1751; *Ibid.*, pp.167-173, 21 Dec. 1753; *Ibid.*, pp.173-182, 7 Jan. 1752; *Ibid.*, pp.147-156, 13 July 1752; *Land Records Misc.*, Pt.86, Book P6, 1795-1796, pp.380-384, 1 June 1784.
13. *Wills, etc.*, Vol. 80A, 1751-54 (tr.), p.218, 3 March 1752/53.
14. George W. Williams, *St. Michael's, Charleston 1751-1951* (Columbia: the University of South Carolina Press, 1951), pp.143, 144,147,149.

15. Alice R. Huger Smith and D.E. Huger Smith, *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston, South Carolina* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1917), pp.223-224; *Land Records Misc., Pt.33, Book 3C, 1764-1765* (tr.), pp.138-144.
16. *BD*, Vol.II, pp.649, 650.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Newport Mercury*, Rhode Island, 3 August 1769; Carl Bridenbaugh, "Charlestonians at Newport, 1767-1775," *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* (Charleston: the first quarterly of the South Carolina Historical Society, Vols. 1-53, 1900-1952; after volume 53 this publication was entitled *South Carolina Historical Magazine*), Vol. 41, p.44 (hereafter cited as *SCH&GM*); *Ibid.*, 7 August 1769, p.45; *Ibid.*, 17 June 1771, p.46.
19. Margaret Simons Middleton, *Jeremiah Theus, Colonial Artist of Charles Town* (Columbia: the University of South Carolina Press, 1953), p.153.
20. Mabel L. Webber, ed., "The Thomas Elfe Account Book, 1768-1775," *SCH&GM*, Vol. 37, pp.31, 79, 112; *Ibid.*, Vol.38, pp.41, 132, 135; *Ibid.*, Vol.40, p.22. Hereafter cited as "EAB."
21. "South Carolina Contributors to the College of Philadelphia," *SCH&GM*, Vol. 45, p.189.
22. *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, Charleston, 25 Feb. 1779; *Ibid.*, 1 Nov. 1780. Hereafter cited as *SC&AGG*.
23. *Will Book B, 1786-1793*, p.241.
24. *Land Records Misc., Pt.92, Books E7-H7, 1801-1803*, pp.434-438, 1 Feb. 1803 (The language of this deed indicates that Logan mortgaged "a lot in Charleston on the east corner of Tradd Street and Logan Street, which is known by the number 17 in the platt of land lately laid out by William Logan."); Robert P. Stockton, "Sommers House 'Excellent,'" *Charleston News & Courier*, 21 July 1975.
25. *Inventories, etc., Vol.C, 1793-1800*, p.1, "Inventory and Appraisement of all and Singular the Goods and Chattles of Humphrey Sommers . . . Gentleman deceased . . ."
26. Bradford L. Rauschenberg, "The Royal Governor's Chair: Evidence of the Furnishing of South Carolina's First State House," *The Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, November, 1980, p.12.
27. Of these titles, Salmon's *Vade Mecum* was part of the personal library of Joseph Wragg, Sr. (*Probate Court Inventories, 1751-53, p.72, 18 September 1751*), while all of the others were either owned by Ezra Waite (see Caroline Wyche Dixon, "The Miles Brewton House: Ezra Waite's Architectural Books and Other Possible Design Sources," *SCHM*, Vol.82, pp.118-142) or sold by Charleston booksellers such as Robert Wells (see *SC&AGG* for his extensive advertisement of 30 March 1772).
28. Charleston Library Society, Charleston, *Catalog of 1770*.
29. In 1984, during the course of reproducing two carved architraves for the east door of the "Palladian room" at Gunston Hall, near Lorton, Virginia, the author had the opportunity to remove the paint from the ca.1758-59 head which still remained on this door. The "eggs" of the egg-and-leaf carving on the heavy ovolo molding of this door head had been sanded by the carver to remove tool marks; the grit used was quite coarse.

30. The *South-Carolina Gazette*, Charleston, 16 April 1750 (hereafter cited as *SCG*); *St. Michael's Episcopal Church Commissioners' Bills, 1751-1762*, South Carolina Historical Society collection 50-257-B.
31. *South Carolina Gazette; and Country Journal*, Charleston, 22 August 1769. Hereafter cited as *SCG&CJ*.
32. *SCG*, 7 April 1749.
33. This family tradition of the identification of the dining room is noted in a pamphlet: Susan Pringle Frost, "Highlights of the Miles Brewton House" (Charleston: Susan Pringle Frost, 1944), p.31.
34. London Public Records Office, *PRO IR/20*, 19 November 1755. Hereafter cited as *PRO*.
35. *Wills, Vols. 11-13, 1767-1771* (tr.), p.637; the will was proved 10 November 1769.
36. Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840* (London: John Murray, 1978), p.369.
37. *Inventories, Book Y*, pp. 180-182; *SCG&CJ*, 21 Nov. 1769.
38. "Journal of Josiah Quincy," op.cit.
39. *SCG*, 23 Nov. 1767; *Ibid.*, 1 Feb. 1738/9.
40. Patricia A. Kirkham, "Samuel Norman: a Study of an Eighteenth-Century Craftsman" (London: *The Burlington Magazine*, August, 1969, pp.501-512), pp.501,504. The Norman apprenticeship was recorded in *PRO IR I/17*, and dated in July of 1746.
41. *PRO IR I/17*, 14 May 1746 (Brook); *Ibid.*, I/20, 16 July 1755 (Bishop); *Ibid.*, I/20, 29 October 1755 (Powell or Porsell). Data courtesy Ms. Patricia Kirkham, London.
42. Kirkham, "Samuel Norman," p.505.
43. Both of these glasses are illustrated in Kirkham, "Samuel Norman," plates 31 and 32. A very similar, but more advanced oval frame is illustrated in Herbert F. Schiffer, *The Mirror Book* (Exton, Pa.: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1983), Fig. 225. Mr. Schiffer suggests a possible attribution to Norman and Whittle for this example.
44. Janie Revill, comp., *A Compilation of the Original Lists of Protestant Immigrants to South Carolina 1763-1773* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1981), p.43.
45. Woodin's deceased wife was mentioned, though not by name, in Woodin's will of that year (*Wills, Vol.16, 1774-79*, 25 March 1773, p.183); *SCG*, 22 Oct. 1764; *Ibid.*, 24 Dec. 1764 (and repeated in several following issues).
46. *Ibid.*, 29 June 1767; the same advertisement appeared in the *SC&AGG* for 17 July 1767 as well as the *SCG&CJ* for 8 September 1767.
47. Microfilm records and papers of the Royal Society of Arts, London, manuscript collection no.1839 in the South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia.
48. Quoted in Rauschenberg, "The Royal Governor's Chair," p.12; the entire account is listed in *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly of South Carolina*, No.37, Pt.2, pp.526-27, 23 February 1768.
49. Rauschenberg, "The Royal Governor's Chair," p.14.
50. "EAB," *SCH&GM*, Vol.35, pp.16, 19.

51. *Land Records Misc.*, Pt.48, Book Z3, 1771-1773, pp.333-336. Woodin was described as "weigher and gauger of Customs" in a deed describing his purchase of 85 acres of land on the Edisto River in Colleton County; the deed was recorded 19 November 1772.
52. *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, pp.336-340, 15 August 1772; *Ibid.*, pp.340-344, 15 August 1772; *Ibid.*, pp.344-348, 15 August 1772; *Ibid.*, pp.354-357, 15 August 1772; *Land Records Misc.*, Pt.51, Book H4, 1773, 30 and 31 August 1773; *Wills*, Vol.16, 1774-79, 25 March 1773, p.183.
53. *Land Records Misc.*, Pt.51, Book H4, 1773, pp.38-40, 8 April 1773.
54. *Wills*, Vol.16, 1774-79, 25 March 1773, p.183.
55. *BD*, Vol. II, pp.727, 728; *Probate Court Inventories 1751-53*, p.72.
56. Mabel L. Webber, ed., "Extracts from the Journal of Mrs. Ann Manigault 1754-1781," *SCH&GM*, Vol.21, p.68.
57. *SCG&CJ*, 6 Sept. 1774; *Ibid.*, 27 Sept. 1774.
58. *South-Carolina Weekly Advertiser*, Charleston, 26 Feb. 1783.
59. *Land Records Misc.*, Pt.66, Book E5, 1781-82, p.77, 11 April 1781; Carl Julien and H.L. Watson, *Ninety-Six: Landmarks of South Carolina's Last Frontier Region* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1950), p.15; Mary K. Davis, "The Feather Bed Aristocracy: Abbeville District in the 1790's," *SCHM*, Vol.80, pp.143, 147.
60. *SCG&CJ*, 17 June 1766.
61. *Ibid.*, 23 Dec. 1766; *SCG*, 24 Feb. 1767 (the wedding took place on 19 February); *BD*, Vol.II, pp. 106, 107.
62. *SCG&CJ*, 12 May 1767.
63. *Ibid.*, 26 July 1768; *Ibid.*, 28 Feb. 1769.
64. *Ibid.*, 11 June 1771; *Misc. Probate Records*, 1767-69, 8 April 1769, p.463.
65. Williams, *St. Michael's*, p.154.
66. *Ibid.*, p.154; Mrs. C.G. Howe and Mrs. Charles F. Middleton, eds., *The Minutes of St. Michael's Church of Charleston, S.C. from 1758-1797* (Charleston: The South Carolina Society of the Colonial Dames of America, undated), pp.92, 93, 98 (vestry meetings of 30 May 1771, 17 June 1771, 27 January 1772).
67. Rev. Frederick Dalcho, *An Historical Account of the Protestant Episcopal Church in South-Carolina* (Charleston: 1820, photo/litho reprint ed. 1972 by Arno Press, Inc., New York), p.184.
68. Williams, *St. Michael's*, p.155, p.351, n.3; Howe and Middleton, *Minutes*, p.114.
69. Williams, *St. Michael's*, p.157. Mr. Williams records that the source of this description was A.E. Miller, published (p.351, n.5) in J.C. French and E. Cary, *The Trip of the Steamer Oceanus to Fort Sumter and Charleston* (Brooklyn: 1865), pp.121, 169.
70. *SCG*, 26 April 1773.
71. *Ibid.*, 10 May 1773; *Ibid.*, 9 August 1773.
72. *Ibid.*, 8 Nov. 1773.
73. "EAB," *SCH&GM*, Vol.37, p.156; *Ibid.*, Vol.40, p.26.
74. *South Carolina Weekly Gazette*, Charleston, 3 May 1783; *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, Charleston, 25 January 1797.

75. Jennie Heyward Register, comp., "Marriage and Death Notices from the City Gazette," *SCH&GM*, Vol.24, p.77; D.E. Huger Smith and A.S. Salley, Jr., eds., *Register of St. Philip's Parish, Charles Town, or Charleston, S.C. 1754-1810* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1971), p.86.
76. "Records from a White Family Bible," *SCH&GM*, Vol.32, p.310 (the entry was made in a Bible inscribed "Alice Mighells her book Feb. the 17th, 1729").
77. "EAB," *SCH&GM*, Vol.42, p.17; W. Robert Higgins, "Charles Town Merchants and Factors Dealing in the External Negro Trade 1735-1775," *SCHM*, Vol.65, p.207.
78. *Gazette of the State of South-Carolina*, Charleston, 2 June 1777; *SC&AGG*, 2 Oct. 1776; *SCG&CJ*, 9 August 1774.
79. *Ibid.*, 9 August 1774.
80. *SC&AGG*, 2 Oct. 1776; Smith and Salley, *Register*, p.92; *Land Records Misc.*, Pt.83, Books K6-L6, 1793-94 (tr.), pp.76-79 (Hainsdorff mortgaged this property several times); Accounts of Josiah Smith, treasurer 1774-1789 (unpaged), Independent Congregational (Circular) Church, Charleston, S.C., South Carolina Historical Society; Accounts of the Independent Congregational (Circular) Church, 1774-1792, South Carolina Historical Society; Smith and Salley, *Register*, p.355; *Inventories*, Vol. C, 1793-1800, p.230, 4 Feb. 1797; *Land Records Misc.*, Pt. 101, Books C8-D8, 1810-1811, pp.366-368, 6 March 1797 (the property is described as lot no. 9 on the south side of Hasell Street, but the *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* for 22 June 1801 describes the sale of "Seven Years LEASE of all that LOT of LAND, No.14, Hasell street . . . To be sold as the property of HENRY HAINSDORF, for arrears of taxes due the state for the year 1796."); *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, 18 March 1797.
81. *Gazette of the State of South-Carolina*, 2 June 1777; *SC&AGG*, 12 Feb. 1778; *Ibid.*, 27 Sept. 1780; *Royal Gazette*, Charleston, 15 August 1781.
82. *South Carolina Weekly Gazette*, Charleston, 12 April 1783; *Land Records Misc.*, Pt.79, Book E6, 1790-92, pp.252-256, 25 Jan. 1791; *Ibid.*, Pt.77, Book C6, 1789-90 (tr.), pp.165-168, 27 and 28 May 1785; *Ibid.*, Books K6-L6, 1793-94 (tr.), pp.147-149; *Ibid.*, Books R6-S6, 1796-98, pp.92-93, 7 March 1796.
83. *BD*, Vol.II, pp.661-663; *Land Records Misc.*, Pt.37, Book H3, 1767-1768 (tr.), pp.356-362, 4 February 1768; *SC&AGG*, 11 March 1768.
84. *BD*, Vol. III, pp. 75-77; unpublished research by Samuel Gaillard Stoney entitled "Major Peter Bocquet's House, c 1770: Residence of commander & Mrs. Clarence W. Bowman, 95 Broad Street" (the acquisition of the lot), South Carolina Historical Society.
85. *BD*, Vol.II, pp.214-216; *Inventories*, A, 1783-1810, p.142.
86. *BD*, Vol.II, pp.220-221; *Wills*, Vol.19, 1780-83, 11 Jan. 1781, p.332; Legare Street land research by Robert P. Stockton in "22 Legare Reflects Eclecticism," *The News and Courier*, 8 March 1976; *Misc. Probate Records*, 14 March 1767, p.630 (the sawmill partnership agreement).
87. *Land Records Misc.*, Pt.25, Book NN, 1753, pp.266-280; *SCG*, 26 July 1770; *BD*, Vol.II, pp.321-322.

88. Ibid., pp.80-81.
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90. Robert H. McCauley, *Liverpool Transfer Designs on Anglo-American Pottery* (Portland, Maine: The Southworth-Anthoensen Press, 1942), pp.7-12; F.H. Garner and Michael Archer, *English Delftware* (London: Faber and Faber, second ed., 1972), p.63 (this source discusses printed tin-glazed ware); *SCG*, 2 Feb. 1765.
91. Rev. Edward G. Lilly and Clifford L. Legerton, *Historic Churches of Charleston* (Charleston: John Huguley Co., Inc., 1966), pp.60-61; *BD*, Vol.II, pp.489,490.
92. *Land Records Misc.*, Pt.63, Books A5-B5, 1776-79, Book A5, pp.70-77, 30 and 31 December 1772 (Fullerton actually paid Gibbes £5,600 for part of a lot on White Point, containing 80 feet on Legare Street); Ibid., pp.396-402, 29 and 30 November 1776; Ibid., Pt.62, Book Z4, 1778 (tr.), pp.129-133, 21 and 22 May 1777; "EAB," *SCH&GM*, Vol. 35, p.16; Ibid., Vol.37, pp.111, 118; Ibid., Vol.40, p.147.
93. Accounts of the Independent Congregational (Circular) Church, Charleston, S.C. 1774-1792, the South Carolina Historical Society; Ravenel, *Architects*, pp.36-38; *BD*, Vol.III, pp.247-248; Mabel L. Webber, ed. "Inscriptions from the Independent or Congregational (Circular) Churchyard, Charleston, S.C.," *SCH&GM*, Vol.29, p.309; *SC&AGG*, 18 March 1779.
94. *BD*, Vol.II, pp.478-481.
95. Ibid., pp.542-543.

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